

# **IOWA BIRD LIFE**

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**IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION**



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## IOWA BIRD LIFE

*The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.*

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# Meet Two Iowa Birders— Michael and Diane Porter

*Robert I. Cecil*

It is rare when the interests and talents of two people seem to coalesce seamlessly into a unified life direction, but it happened with Michael and Diane Porter of Fairfield. Their fascinations with nature and gadgets and communication and spirituality led them to a holistic embrace of birds, birding, and the business of birding, all now distilled into their superlative website <[www.birdwatching.com](http://www.birdwatching.com)>.

They were both born in southern California (Diane in Santa Monica, Michael in Los Angeles) in 1940. As a child, Diane fell in love with the outdoors and wildlife, especially birds, when her father took her on camping trips in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. Michael was always interested in technology and gadgets. And both had a dream of living close to nature. They found each other at Pomona College, in Claremont, California. Diane majored in English with an emphasis in writing. Michael graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara, with a B.A. in Religious Studies. They married in 1962. In California, Diane taught junior high English and social studies, and Michael was a real estate agent.

In 1966, they became caretakers for 160 acres of private land in the mountains, surrounded by national forest, near Santa Barbara. On the evening that they were moving into the rustic cabin, a white owl with a heart-shaped face flew out of the woods and circled over their heads. They supposed that the owl came to see who they were or what was happening to its lonely refuge. Its visit at that moment on the mountain seemed like a benediction. During the four years they lived there, they kept warm with a wood stove, read at night by kerosene lantern, and got their water from an ice-cold spring in the canyon. They learned to grow vegetables, kept goats, made cheese, and developed self-reliance.



*Diane and Michael Porter*



A friend gave Diane a used copy of Peterson's *Field Guide to Western Birds*. Diane spent an hour looking through the book, starting on page one, to identify the birds that were helping themselves to seeds in the chicken coop. She found her birds on practically the last page—Golden-crowned Sparrows. On her journey through the book, she learned that the owl with the heart-shaped face was a Barn Owl. Then she lost herself in the birds of her mountain home—Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Phainopeplas, California Quails, and all the rest. In summer, Michael and Diane swam in a natural, stream-fed pond while Violet-green Swallows swooped by them, touching the surface for a drink as they passed.

In 1982, because of their interest in Transcendental Meditation, they moved to Fairfield to be close to Maharishi International University (now Maharishi University of Management), which had recently opened in the old Parsons College campus. Michael recalls their visit to the Amana Colonies looking for furniture for their home. The salesman gave them the name of his son, Carl Bendorf, a birder in Iowa City. Carl put them in touch with Tom Kent, who became editor of *Iowa Bird Life* in 1986. They joined the IOU in 1982 and have remained members since. Diane served on the IOU Board of Directors from 1989 to 1993 and was on an IOU committee that set up the team to produce *A Teacher's Activity Booklet about...Iowa Birds* by Linda L.R. Zaletel, Rick Hollis, and Beth Brown. It was published by the IOU and Iowa Conservation Education Council in 1992 for use by elementary and middle school students; 2,500 were purchased by groups and individuals and distributed to Iowa schools. Diane worked on the first breeding bird atlas and is looking forward to the upcoming project. She also finds time to be a regular contributor the *Iowa Bird Life* field reports. Michael and Diane have grown to appreciate Iowa's varied habitats, its birds, and its changing weather. Having grown up in southern California, where frost on the grass was a novelty, and for a rare treat people would drive their children to the mountains so they could see snow, Michael and Diane think Iowa winters are fun. They love to go for a walk after a fresh snowfall and observe the bird and animal tracks.

They needed to start new careers when they moved to Iowa. Michael's love of gadgets had prompted him to purchase the first Macintosh computer, and in 1986 they launched their company, Ideaform, Inc. of Iowa. Their first products were small utility programs to help Mac users organize their files. In 1989, they created Bird Brain, a birding database for the Mac. Michael's original idea was simply to put Diane's sighting records in taxonomic order for submitting seasonal reports to *Iowa Bird Life*. But as he programmed it, the project evolved into a commercial software product that helped birders keep life lists and organize observations, as well as submit seasonal reports. Bird Brain quickly became the leading Macintosh birding database.

The Porters discovered that Bird Brain was intrinsically more satisfying to produce than utility software. "We like to get others involved in discovering nature. We know that birding develops a person's awareness of all of nature, of the environment and our place in it," Michael explained. "A person who is keeping track of the birds, noticing when the warblers pass through in fall and return in spring, is more likely to be aware of what's happening in Central America, to work for preservation of natural habitat, and to make good choices as a citizen."

"It was an *Aha!* moment," Diane put in. "And that's when we came up with our company mission statement. From then on we would work only on things that help to move humankind toward a sustainable culture on the planet."

In 1995, Michael and Diane started writing reviews of binoculars and spotting scopes for *Bird Watcher's Digest*, doing so once or twice a year ever since. When Internet service came to

Fairfield, their website, <birdwatching.com>, was born, and where they post their optics reviews after publication in the magazine. In addition to offering Bird Brain on the Internet, they also started selling birding software made by other companies for PC computers. They added a few binoculars to their offerings, and a video they produced in 1997, *How to Start Watching Birds*. Now their website offers a full line of binoculars and spotting scopes in all price ranges, and ships optics and other birding products to customers all over North America.

Continuing with his interest in technology, Michael served from 1997 to 2008 as vice president of marketing at LISCO, the very Internet service provider that made their website possible. Diane worked on their website and staffed the store. For the last five years, she's also had a regular column in the bimonthly *Backyard Bird Newsletter*, and is a contributing editor for *Bird Watcher's Digest*. She has written for *The Iowa Source* and writes a column for the quarterly *Sierra Club Leopold Group Newsletter*. Their website hosts a number of her articles, including the cover article of the July 2005 *Bird Watcher's Digest* about a family of House Wrens in her yard. She chronicles their success in keeping the garden pest free, and, in the section, "How the Nest Was Won," follows the rearing of their family.

After living in town for 23 years, in 2004 Michael and Diane bought a house on 100 acres of rural land three miles south of Fairfield, a luxury they could never have afforded if they'd remained in California. They acquired an old portable schoolhouse and refinished it to become the website store and offices.

On their land, which they call Aranyani (the East Indian version of Diana, the Roman goddess of the forest), they have also nurtured the land's habitats. "Pastures, woods, a pond, a big stream and a little stream, and lots of trails," notes Michael. For them it represents Iowa's varied habitats as well as its varied birds. Diane counts off the Bobolinks, Henslow's Sparrows, and Bell's Vireos that nest there, and the Yellow-breasted Chats, Olive-sided Flycatchers, White-eyed Vireos, and Common Redpolls that have put in occasional appearances. She keeps an almanac of species' comings and goings, to compare trends over the years. When asked if she has time for birding, she laughs and replies, "I'm always birding!" adding that she never goes anywhere without binoculars.

Michael and Diane love to talk about their business. One senses that although it's their livelihood, it's really because they have a passion for what they are doing. Having frequently served as testers of optical equipment, they bring their candid, hands-on reviews and recommendations to the website. Or you can just call them. "What I enjoy doing is to help people find the right equipment for *their* use, *their* eyes, and *their* budget," says Michael. "We specialize in giving individual advice." He points out that while the very best binoculars cost only a few cents a day over a lifetime of birding, the mid-range binoculars are now better than the best ones of not too many years ago. However, when asked what his favorite binocular is, he replies, "I have all the best binoculars on the market to choose among, but when I want to go out and look at something, I grab my Swarovski EL 8 x 32." He says he never has never picked up a binocular that more perfectly fits in the hand. "It's compact and lightweight. It feels like an extension of the hand and is a natural at instinctive pointing."

The Porters' next commercial project is an all-new Bird Brain, which Michael is writing in a different computer language this time. The previous version languished when Helix, the underlying software, failed to keep up with changes in the Mac operating system. The new Bird Brain keeps track of notes, photos, and all kinds of life lists—overall life list, state, nation,

backyard, year, among others—and it has a number of new features. The Porters plan for it to be ready this year.

Michael and Diane have moved back toward a homesteading lifestyle. They heat their home and office with an outdoor, wood-burning boiler, making good use of trees that fall across their carefully maintained trails. Their big garden, protected by a fence against jumping deer and chewing rabbits, produces lots of Brandywine tomatoes and other vegetables and berries. Last year it also yielded a bumper crop of bluebirds. Nine chicks fledged from two nestings as a pair flourished in the protected environment. By the end of the nesting season the bluebirds were accepting mealworms from the hand. Michael and Diane would like to do some birding trips—a three day Nikon-sponsored trip for Diane to Guatemala last year was a tantalizing taste of tropical birding—but it's difficult to find the time to get away, and a place to go that they enjoy more than Iowa.

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## Field Reports—Fall 2008

*Paul Hertzel*



*Paul Hertzel*

### WEATHER

The weather was unexceptional this fall, in stark contrast to the summer. There were no heat waves, precipitation was average, extremes were few, and the season quietly lapsed into a cool ending with early snow. It opened with August slightly cooler than normal, but much drier than normal, a welcome relief from the floods of summer. Severe weather occurred only twice, over the eastern two-thirds of the state on the 4th and 5th, and in the northwest on the 13th. September saw an increase in rainfall over August, but it was inconsistent, from Mason City's mere 1.37 inches of rain for the month, to 7 inches that fell in one event in the southeast in the middle of the month. State-wide, totals ended only slightly above average.



Temperatures also leveled off in mid-September and stayed even right through most of October. In fact, killing freezes were very late this year, with most of the northern half of the state holding out until October 21 and the southern half until October 28. The notable rains of October were in the west, exactly where it was needed. There, rain amounts were about double normal, but little of it found its way to eastern Iowa. On the 26th, the first snow fell across the northeast. November temperatures steadily sank and more snow fell in the north on the 6th, 7th and 11th. Most of the western counties saw more snow on the 22nd, and then the entire state was blanketed on the 29th and 30th.

#### HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

The 2008 ornithological fall season was a mild affair, compared to the spectacular, vagrant-rich autumn of 2007. Perhaps it makes no sense to try to explain short-term statistical swings, but as more and more habitat is lost, and biodiversity decreases, the impact on fragile remaining ecosystems of events like Iowa's widespread summer flooding is hard to ignore. Stephen Dinsmore commented that it appears the summer floods may have altered fish populations, especially in the larger reservoirs. If, for instance, the gizzard shad suffered massive failure, it would explain the unusually low numbers of mergansers, loons, and some of the gulls, plus it would explain why some birds, like pelicans, did not linger much. In addition, flooding always alters low-lying habitat along the major river corridors. Dinsmore points out this can result in barren flats with little or no vegetation cover, and a corresponding scarcity of birds, like sparrows, that make use of this habitat.

One of the few highlights was the goose migration, which for some reason, was the best in many years. More than half a million Snow Geese were observed in the west, along with a modern fall record of 5,000 Greater White-fronted Geese, plus a pair of Brant in Mason City. Most waterfowl followed traditional patterns, but a scarcity of major cold fronts made for few statewide events, and both depleted food supplies and early ice may have cut the stay short for many divers. Common Loons were never very plentiful, and there was only one other individual loon found all season.

Iowa's two hawk watches had relatively uneventful seasons—no casual or accidental species, and many less-than-typical flights. At the Hitchcock NC tower in the Loess Hills, where Swainson's Hawks numbers are sometimes spectacular, the season total of 164 was more than disappointing. It was the worst total on record, and only about 4% of the 2005 season total of 3,648, by comparison. On the other hand, Hitchcock did have record high totals for two falcons, Merlins and Peregrines. At Grammer Grove in Marshall County, hawk watchers also tied their record for Peregrines.

Good shorebird habitat was scarce, with pools too full, and edges flood-damaged. Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, which is often one of the best locations for shorebirds in the fall, never was able to offer suitable habitat, for the second consecutive year. One of the few reliable locations for shorebirds was Diamond Lake in Dickinson County, which had been deliberately drawn down by the Iowa DNR. High counts in the state for both Golden-Plover and Red-necked Phalarope occurred there.

Northern owls moved into the state early and often, including at least six Snowy Owls, the most in fall since 1993. The first occurred in late October, just before the last Common Nighthawk was recorded, and two Townsend's Solitaires showed up in the west. But

even with these early indicators of the impending winter, the fall remained mild, and many passerines lingered late. Second-latest dates were set for Warbling Vireo, Tree Swallow, Sedge Wren, and Henslow's Sparrow. Four warblers set record-late dates, including three in November—Nashville Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and Ovenbird. The migration itself continued to feel light, almost a reflection of the mild, but cool weather. Dennis Carter wrote, "The fall migration was one of the lightest that I have experienced. Warblers were especially scarce with less than five individuals of most species." By contrast, and in conjunction with the early snows, winter finches appeared across the state, perhaps indicating it would be a good year for lowans who watch for these visitors. There were four reports of Red Crossbills, one of White-winged Crossbills, and four of Common Redpolls, only the fourth fall season in the last 20 years to have all three present. But Pine Siskins were the most abundant of the winter finches, with 36 reports from all parts of the state including 72 birds in one flock on the last day of fall.

## UNUSUAL SPECIES

There were four individuals classified accidental found in Iowa this fall. Two Barrow's Goldeneyes were found, one in the west, and another at Red Rock Reservoir in the south-central part of the state. A Glossy Ibis documented in summer remained at Forney Lake long enough to be recorded in the fall season. A Bullock's Oriole was discovered visiting a feeder in September. In addition, there were twelve records of casual species: a Snowy Plover, two Red Phalaropes, three Black-legged Kittiwakes, two Laughing Gulls, two California Gulls, a Sprague's Pipit, and a Prairie Warbler.

## SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species. \* = documented. County names are in italics. Full names of contributors are at the end of the article. Abbreviations used: **A** = area, **L** = lake, **M** = marsh, **m.ob.** = many observers, **NA** = nature area, **NC** = Nature Center, **NM** = National Monument, **NWR** = national wildlife refuge, **P** = park, **R** = river, **RA** = recreation area, **Res** = reservoir, **SF** = state forest, **SI** = slough, **SP** = state park, **USNWR** = Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, **WPA** = waterfowl production area, **WA** = wildlife area.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** On 16 Sep, unexplained singles were at Gray's L *Polk* (JB) and North Liberty *Johnson* (Chris Kochanny *vide* SJD). The first migrant flocks appeared on 9 Oct when 190 were seen in *Pottawattamie* (MO) and 134 were in *Deca-*

*tur* (NJM). 5,000 estimated at Riverton *WA Fremont* on 12 Oct (KDy) is the largest fall event I can find in the modern record.

**Snow Goose:** more than half a million birds were reported, most in a single flight on 14 Nov when 326,500 were counted by hawk watchers at the Hitchcock *NC in Pottawattamie* (MO). About 80,000 passed the tower on 8 Nov and another 92,000 on 23 Nov (JT). Away from the Missouri R flyway, reports were scattered and totals were small. The first few were 2 on 5 Oct in *Muscatine*, and 2 on 7 Oct in *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

**Ross's Goose:** The first was 2nd-earliest on 16 Sep at Jester Park *Polk* (JG, RIA, PHA), with the next sighting three weeks later on 4 Oct (PH). There were nine additional reports with the most 61 on 23 Nov in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**BRANT:** Two juv *B. b. hrota* were noticed grazing the lawn of the NIACC campus



in *Cerro Gordo* 20 Nov, and stayed through 27 Nov (\*PH, \*RG, \*CF, \*CRE). This is Iowa's eleventh record, nine of which have been the eastern race.

**Cackling Goose:** Returned in late September with 18 found 28 Sep at Polk City WA *Polk* (SJD). Reports increased and became widespread with the most a count of 2,100 in *Cerro Gordo* on 14 Nov (PH).

**Canada Goose:** The first migrants, *B. c. interior*, arrived 25 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (PH). 8 birds showing characteristics of *B. c. parvipes* were at Clear L in *Cerro Gordo* 9 Oct (PH).

**Mute Swan:** One was at L Macbride *Johnson* 19 Aug (BSc).

**Trumpeter Swan:** There were five reports of single, unmarked birds, and eleven reports of multiple birds. The most was a gathering of 54 on 2 Nov at USNWR *Kossuth*, of which only 6 wore collars (PH).

**Tundra Swan:** By 9 Nov along the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* (RWZ), numbers had built to several thousand. Peaked 18 Nov when 5,890 were counted at Pool #9 *Allamakee* during USFWS aerial surveys. Away from the Mississippi R—1 juv 21, 22 Nov in *Story* (SJD), and 2 on 21 Nov at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* (GLV).

**Wood Duck:** 223 on 14 Sep were gathered in the same corner of Trumbull L *Clay* (BSc).

**Gadwall:** A female with young on 3–5 Aug at Moeckley Prairie *Polk* (SJD) was south of the expected breeding range. Migrated through the central part of the state in the fourth week of Oct (RLC, AB, SSP) and peaked along the Mississippi R 28 Oct when 2,625 were at Pool #9 in *Allamakee* (USFWS).

**American Wigeon:** Six reports with the most 20 on 29 Nov at Pool #13 *Clinton* (JG).

**American Black Duck:** First: 1 on 11

Aug at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy), followed by another on 1 Sep in *Polk* (DK). The most was 4 on 26 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB).

**Mallard:** The peak movements were 21–28 Nov: 4,400 in *Polk* (SJD), 10,000 in *Fremont* (KDy), and 19,585 in *Allamakee* (USFWS).

**Blue-winged Teal:** Most were gone by September, but isolated reports continued throughout the period. The most was 1,650 on 23 Aug along the Des Moines River in *Marion* (AB).

**Cinnamon Teal:** One was at the Lamoni sewage lagoon *Decatur* 11–15 Oct (JRL, NJM).

**Northern Shoveler:** Most: 750 on 10 Nov at Lake Rathbun *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Northern Pintail:** A brood found in summer in *Pocahontas* (Dinsmore 2008) was still present 1 Aug (SJD). About 6,000 were at Riverton *Fremont* 12 Oct (KDy). The only other large concentration was 229 on 2 Nov at USNWR *Kossuth* (PH).

**Green-winged Teal:** Peaked in central Iowa on 16 Oct with 490 at Saylorville Res (SJD), and western Iowa 5 Nov with 1867 at De Soto NWR *Harrison* (USFWS).

**Canvasback:** Away from the Mississippi R, the first were 2 on 20 Oct at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP). Peaked on 28 Oct when aerial surveys counted 190,650 in the McGregor District *Allamakee* (USFWS). There were still about 12,000 on 29 Nov at Pool #13 *Clinton* (JG).

**Redhead:** Most: 55 on 11 Nov at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Passed through the center of the state in pockets: 350 on 27 Oct at Saylorville (SJD), and 200 on 10 Nov at Rathbun L *Appanoose* (RLC). Along the Mississippi R, there were still 4,000 on 29 Nov at Pool #13 *Clinton* (JG).

**Greater Scaup:** First: 1 on 26 Oct at

Saylorville *Polk* (JG, SJD). Small groups in the last half of Nov were 23 at Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET), 14 at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP), 13 at Red Rock *Marion* (AB), and 10 at Saylorville (SJD).

**Lesser Scaup:** The first migrants were found 20 Oct at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP). Peaked along the Mississippi R 28 Oct when 49,550 were estimated by aerial survey (USFWS), but central Iowa peaks were later. On 10 Nov, 1,250 were at Rathbun L *Appanoose* (RLC), and on 15 Nov, 6,000 were at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB, BE, SJD) and another 2,000 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

**Surf Scoter:** Approximately 24 birds were reported from 8 locations. The first was 2 on 15 Oct at Pleasant Creek RA *Linn* (DP), and the most was 5 on 13 Nov at Bettendorf *Scott* (WMZ). Only one adult male was reported, on 22 Oct at Saylorville (SJD).

**White-winged Scoter:** The only report was a single imm/fem type on 5–15 Nov at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JG, RIA, PHA, AB, SJD).

**Black Scoter:** Approximately 23 birds were reported from 11 different locations, the most widespread occurrence I can find in the record. All who provided details judged their birds to be fem/imm types. The first appeared on the 3rd-earliest date of 16 Oct when 2 were at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO). The most was 5 on 18 Nov at Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET).

**Long-tailed Duck:** The first of seven reports was 1 on 6 Nov at Twin Lakes sewage lagoon *Calhoun* (SSP). Adult males were at Saylorville Res 15 Nov (BE) and W Okoboji L *Dickinson* 21 Nov (ET), all others were females. One found at a gravel pit in Decorah *Winneshieck* 22–28 Nov (DC) was only the second record for the county.

**Bufflehead:** First: 2 on 16 Oct at Say-

lorville Res *Polk* (JG). Peaked in the central part of the state on 15 Nov when 150 were at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH) and 140 were at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD, AB). Along the Mississippi R, 2,415 were counted on 18 Nov at Pool #9 *Allamakee* (USFWS).

**Common Goldeneye:** Only a few were reported away from the Mississippi R where the first 15 were counted on 14 Oct and 1,245 were at Pool #9 *Allamakee* on 18 Nov (USFWS).

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** An adult male at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* 16–18 Nov was relocated 22 Nov at Port Neal (\*TLu, \*DB, \*GLV, \*POR, BFH). Another adult male was found 30 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (\*SJD, JG).

**Hooded Merganser:** Most: 49 on 10 Nov at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP).

**Common Merganser:** The first was 3rd-earliest on 26 Oct at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO). The most was 460 on 23 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (AB), well below typical high counts that number in the thousands. SJD suggests summer flooding may have adversely affected some fish populations, particularly gizzard shad along the central Iowa reservoir system.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** First: 26 on 10 Nov at South Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP). Also reported in late Nov in *Polk* and *Woodbury* with a high count of 52 on 16 Nov at Saylorville Res (SJD).

**Ruddy Duck:** Multiple broods were found in summer (Dinsmore 2008) and continued to be reported in Aug in *Winneshieck* (DC) and Sep in *Polk* (JG, SJD). Began to gather in mid-Oct with about 400 at Saylorville Res (SJD, AB), and reaching peak rafts more than 500 in mid-Nov at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH) and Saylorville (SJD, JG).

**Gray Partridge:** There were only a handful of reports from *Plymouth*, *Polk*,

and *Dickinson*. DNR August roadside surveys yielded numbers 54% below the 10-year average.

**Northern Bobwhite:** Reported from *Plymouth*, *Decatur*, *Harrison*, and *Linn*. August survey numbers were 27% below the 10-year average (IA DNR), indicating the population continues to decline.

**Red-throated Loon:** A single juv was at Saylorville Res *Polk* 16 Nov (SJD, JG, RLC).

**Common Loon:** 3 at Spirit L *Dickinson* on 1 Aug (SJD) may have been birds recorded there during summer (Dinsmore 2008). Another early individual was at Ada Hayden P *Story* on 6 Sep (WO). The migration began with a trickle of late Oct birds, but never amounted to much. The most was 97 on 12 Nov at Saylorville (SJD, JG, AB) and another 26 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (CJF) the same day.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Most: 111 on 9 Oct at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD).

**Horned Grebe:** 1 on 10 Oct at Saylorville (JG) was almost two weeks earlier than the next sighting on Oct 23 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Most: As many as 67 at Saylorville 12, 13 Nov (AB, JG, SJD). Other groups: 10 on 1 Nov at Spirit L *Dickinson* (LAS), and 10 on 14 Nov at Pleasant Creek *Linn* (BSc).

**Red-necked Grebe:** All: An adult and a juv were at Grover's L *Dickinson* 1 Aug (SJD), the only location the species was reported during the summer (Dinsmore 2008); 2 adults and a juv were at USNWR *Kossuth* 13 Aug (MCK); singles were at Spirit L *Dickinson* 11–18 Nov (LAS, ET), and at Saylorville Res *Polk* 12–18 Nov (AB, SJD, JG, JS, JB).

**Eared Grebe:** Although there were two mid-summer reports (Dinsmore 2008), none were found in July or August. The first was 1 on 26 Sep at Saylorville Res *Polk*,

where up to 2 could be found through 1 Nov (SJD, AB, JG). The only others were 1–6 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 4 Oct–18 Nov (JG, LAS, ET), and 1 on 1 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG).

**Western Grebe:** After breeding was confirmed in late July at USNWR *Kossuth*, 17 birds were present there 13 Aug (MCK). The 9 adults and 8 young gave the impression there may have been as many as 4 distinct broods. By 12 Oct only 1 could still be found there (MCK). Others were at Spirit L *Dickinson* 1 Aug–11 Nov with a peak of 10 on 16 Oct (SJD, ET, KVS, LAS), and 1 or 2 at Red Rock Res *Marion* through the month of Nov (JG, AB).

**American White Pelican:** On 9 Aug, 3,000 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP) was the first large concentration. The peak at Saylorville was a very modest 4,800 on 24, 25 Sep (AB, SJD), and numbers quickly declined. 2,175 at Red Rock Res *Marion* on 11 Oct (JG) was the last notable group, dwindling to 438 on 15 Nov (JG) and 29 on 30 Nov (SJD).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** About 200 of mixed ages at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 24 Aug appeared to have nested there (BSc). Peaks were 1761 on 27 Sep *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 1,753 at Pool #9 *Allamakee* (USFWS). The last was 8 on 23 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG).

**American Bittern:** All: 1 at Moeckley Prairie *Polk* until 6 Sep (BE, DP); 1 at USNWR *Kossuth* 12 Sep (MCK); 1 at Errington Marsh *Polk* 5 Oct (BE, JG, SJD); 1 at Luton WMA *Woodbury* until 14 Oct (TLu); 1 or 2 at Banner WA *Warren* until 1 Nov (JS).

**Least Bittern:** The last was a juv at Ada Hayden P *Story* 19 Sep (WO). Also reported in Aug in groups of 2–4 from *Freemont* (Kdy), *Greene* (LGD), *Kossuth* (MCK) and *Polk* (RIA, PHA), and a single in *Dickinson* (SJD, LAS).

**Great Blue Heron:** Most: 155 on 30 Aug in the vicinity of Red Rock Res Marion (SJD).

**Great Egret:** Approximately 400 were in *Fremont* on 29 Aug (Kdy). Other fall concentrations were 249 at Red Rock Marion (SJD) and another 144 at Hartford WA Warren (JG), both on 30 Aug, and 126 along the Des Moines R Marion 6 Sep (JG). The last two were at Palo Marsh Linn on 4 Nov (BSc) and Saylorville Res on 6 Nov (AB).

**Snowy Egret:** 11 were in *Fremont* 1 Aug–22 Sep including 9 in one flock on 10 Sep (Kdy). Three others were: 1 at Sandhill L Woodbury 23 Aug (TLu, GLV), 1 below the Saylorville Dam Polk on 26 Sep (SJD), and a very late individual on 11 Oct at Christopherson Sl Dickinson (PH) barely one mile from the Minnesota border.

**Little Blue Heron:** Up to 7 were at Forney L *Fremont* 1–29 Aug (AB, Kdy), and 1 was in *Decatur* 22 Sep (NJM).

**Cattle Egret:** All: Perhaps as many as 800 were present at Forney L *Fremont* 1 Aug–27 Sep (DA, Kdy). Elsewhere, ones and twos were at Hawkeye WA Johnson 23 Aug (DP), near Bagley Guthrie 21 Sep (HZ), rural Dickinson 14 Oct (ET), and in *Allamakee* 9, 10 Nov (RWZ, RG).

**Green Heron:** The last was near Gedney L Muscatine 29 Sep (SSP).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Reported from eight locations, with the most 30 at Forney L *Fremont* during the month of Aug (Kdy, DA). Also reported from Kossuth, Scott, Hancock, Warren, Linn and Story, with the last 1 on 5 Nov at Ada Hayden P Story (WO).

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** Up to seven were at Forney L *Fremont* 1–29 Aug (Kdy, DA). The only other report was 1 on 6 Aug in Boone (Jim Moreland *fide* SJD).

**GLOSSY IBIS:** After being documented at Forney L *Fremont* in summer (Din-

smore 2008), this species continued there until 10 Aug (Kdy-details).

**White-faced Ibis:** Up to 91 Ibis were at Forney L *Fremont* through late Aug (Kdy, DA), presumably all White-faced. All others: 1 at Sandhill L Woodbury on 16 Aug (GLV), and 3 at Willow Sl Mills on 16 Sep (Kdy).

**Turkey Vulture:** Some peaks were 361 on 13 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 214 on 15 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM). The last was a group of 10 over Geode SP Des Moines 24 Nov (Chuck Fuller).

**Osprey:** Most passed through in Sep with a peak of 23 on 23 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). Singles continued to trickle through in Oct and the last was 1 at Clear L Cerro Gordo on 1 Nov (PH).

**Mississippi Kite:** 7 were counted on the season at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* including the last on 21 Sep (MO). Elsewhere, 1 or 2 adults were seen 2 Aug–17 Sep in the city of Des Moines, especially near Waterworks Park (SJD, AB, JB), and another adult was in *Decatur* 18, 19 Sep (JLi, NJM).

**Bald Eagle:** 96 passed the Hitchcock hawk watch station 6–8 Nov, then peaked again on 24 Nov when 71 were counted (MO). At Grammer Grove Marshall, the big days were 37 on 25 Oct and 36 on 15 Nov (MP) the same day 16 were counted at Waubonsie SP *Fremont* (Kdy).

**Northern Harrier:** Very widely reported, starting in late Sep. Peaked in Nov with 21 on 7 Nov in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 10 on 13 Nov at Neal Smith NWR Jasper “moving through early in the morning, flying low in groups of 3 or 4” (KVS).

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** The first was 1 on 26 Aug at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* where 364 passed the tower 24–28 Sep (MO). The high count at Grammer Grove

*Marshall* was a full month later with 68 on 25 Oct (MP).

**Cooper's Hawk:** High counts at the hawk watches were 30 at Hitchcock 26 Sep, and 41 at Grammer Grove 27 Sep (MO, MP).

**Northern Goshawk:** There were four counted at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie*: 2 on 12 Oct, 1 on 16 Oct, and 1 on 16 Nov (MO). Elsewhere, 1 was at Waubonsie SP *Fremont* 15 Nov (KDY), and another was in *Decatur* 16 Nov (JLi).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** 1 or 2 were reported in *Allamakee*, *Black Hawk*, *Bremer*, *Decatur*, *Hardin*, *Marshall*, *Pottawattamie*, *Warren*.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** High counts were 468 on 20 Sep at Sugar Bottom RA *Johnson* (BSc), 441 on 20 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP), and 255 on 24 Sep at Hitchcock NA *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Swainson's Hawk:** At the Hitchcock NC hawk watch *Pottawattamie* only 164 were counted on the season—141 in late Sep, and another 23 in early Oct (MO). This is a pitiful, perplexing total for a flight corridor that has averaged 1,725 birds per season for 6 seasons. Statewide, there were only four other reports, all singles between 17 Sep–6 Oct (MP, NJM, SSP). The last floated by Hitchcock on 11 Oct.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** On 15 Oct, Grammer Grove hawk watchers recorded their peak of 124, and on the same day MCK counted 131 in the skies over Algona *Kossuth* and Hitchcock hawk watchers counted 341 cruising the Loess Hills ridgeline.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** The first two were both in *Woodbury*, 1 on 4 Oct (POR) and another on 18 Oct (TLu). At Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* there were 13 on 29 Nov (POR). Also reported from nine other widely-scattered counties.

**Golden Eagle:** There were at least 29

individuals with the first 1 on 2 Oct in *Decatur* (JLi, NJM). 12 were counted during the fall months at Hitchcock NC *Pottawattamie*, 9 of which occurred during 7–24 Nov (MO). Grammer Grove hawk watchers counted 7, including 3 on 15 Nov (MP). At least 2 were in *Allamakee* during 9–27 Nov (RWZ, BSc, DP, JG), and there were 7 other reports of singles spanning 15 Oct–16 Nov.

**American Kestrel:** The Hitchcock season total of 84 was the lowest ever. This species shows a steady pattern of decline at hawk watches across North America (MO).

**Merlin:** The first was 1 on 2 Sep in *Webster* (SJD), while both hawk watches recorded their firsts on 9 Sep (MO, MP). The Hitchcock hawk watch season total of 54 was a record high. Elsewhere in the state, there were 31 reports from 17 counties. Of 19 identified to race, 12 were *columbarius* and 7 were *richardsonii*. At least 5 were found roosting in Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines 9 Nov (JG).

**Peregrine Falcon:** The season total of 56 at Hitchcock NC *Pottawattamie* was a record total (MO), and 14 at Grammer Grove *Marshall* tied the record there (MP). Peak counts occurred 20–23 Sep at both hawk watches with 18 at Hitchcock and 9 at Grammer Grove (MO, MP). Also reported from 12 additional counties.

**Prairie Falcon:** All: 1 on 8 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM-details), 1 on 29 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM-details), 1 on 26 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO), 1 on 27 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (Ryan Evans, MO-details), and 1 on 14 Nov in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Yellow Rail:** Six reports, all during 28 Sep–19 Oct: 1 on 28 Sep at Neher's farm *Grundy* (LN), up to 4 flushed in front of mowers 5–7 Oct in *Decatur* (JRL, NJM, JLi), 1 on 11, 12 Oct at Errington M *Polk* (SJD, AB, JG), 1 on 16 Oct near Otter Creek M *Tama* (SSP), 1 on 18 Oct in *Appanoose*

(RLC, TJ), and 1 on 19 Oct at the Kurtz farm *Marshall* (Carl Kurtz *vide* SJD).

**Virginia Rail:** The last 2 were at Snake Creek M *Greene* 28 Sep (DTh, LGD).

**Sora:** Very widely reported, with the most 30 on 12 Sep at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK). The last was at Wickiup Hill *Linn* 18 Oct (BSc).

**Common Moorhen:** Adults with young were reported from three locations: Errington M *Polk* 9 Aug–6 Sep (DTh, TLu, DP, JG), Forney L *Fremont* 15 Aug (KDy), and Snake Creek M *Greene* 24 Aug (LGD).

**American Coot:** Huge rafts formed by early October, peaking with 110,575 at Spirit L *Dickinson* 16 Oct (ET).

**Sandhill Crane:** Small clusters were reported from 9 counties. Of note were 6 at Sweet M *Bremer* 20 Sep (JG), up to 9 at Riverton WA *Fremont* 14–22 Nov (KDy), 11 in *Guthrie* 17 Oct (Jim Moreland *vide* SJD), and 14 still at New Albin *Allamakee* 28 Nov (JG).

**Black-bellied Plover:** The first few were singles on 9 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP), 24 Aug at Jester P *Polk* (BE), and 27 Aug at Myre Sl *Winnebago* (RG). Up to 30 were at Saylorville Res *Polk* 25 Sep–5 Oct (SJD, AB, JB), and the last was a group of 12 on 18 Oct in *Marion* (AB).

**American Golden-Plover:** There were two July reports (Dinsmore 2008), then 1 on 3 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP) began the fall reports. Most: 45 on 11 Oct at Diamond L *Dickinson* (PH). Other groups were 14 on 30 Aug at Runnells *Marion* (SJD), 15 on 14 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM), up to 21 at Saylorville Res *Polk* 21–27 Sep (AB, BE, JB, SJD), and 16 on 4 Oct near Harrier M but in *Greene* (LGD). The last was a Saylorville flyover 15 Nov (SJD-details).

**SNOWY PLOVER:** 1 in the drizzle at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 3 Sep (\*BSc) is the fourth record in the last 5 years.

**Semipalmated Plover:** Never gathered in numbers more than 16 at Jester P *Polk* 6 Sep (WO). The last few were found on 12 Oct in *Polk* (AB) and *Marion* (JS).

**Piping Plover:** The only one was in Ames *Story* on 14 Sep (SJD-photo).

**Killdeer:** Most: 872 on 14 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM).

**American Avocet:** All: up to 16 were at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 5–29 Aug (DP, BSc), 4 on 24 Aug at Amana L *Iowa* (DP), 1–7 at Saylorville Res *Polk* 29 Aug–8 Oct (AB, JG, PHA, RIA, SJD), 21 on 24 Sep at Cedar L *Linn* (BSc, DP) and 5 there on 14 Oct (BSc), and the last 1 at Ft. Madison *Lee* on 2 Nov became record late on 15 Nov (JWR, Chuck Fuller).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** The last was 1 on 15 Oct at Cherry Glen *Polk* (JB).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** The last two; 1 on 2 Oct at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JJD), and 1 on 9 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** No reports of more than 5 on 18 Oct at Luton WMA *Woodbury* (TLu). The last was 1 on 21 Nov at Secret L *Fremont* (KDy).

**Willet:** All: 20 on 12 Aug at Saylorville Res *Polk* (RIA, PHA, DP), 1 on 14 Aug at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (BSc) and another there on 30 Aug (DP), 1 on 11 Oct at Cheever L *Emmet* (LAS), and 1 on 12 Oct along the Des Moines R in *Marion* (JS).

**Lesser Yellowlegs.** High counts: Up to 151 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 1–6 Aug (SJD, MCK), and 272 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 30 Aug (SJD). The last was 1 on 1 Nov at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG).

**Upland Sandpiper:** The last two reports were 10 on 11 Aug in *Decatur* (JLi), and 1 on 14 Aug in *Johnson* (BSc).

**Hudsonian Godwit:** 1 was at Runnells *Marion* on 30 Aug (SJD-details, AB-details, JG). Another group of 4 on 24 Aug was reported without details.

**Marbled Godwit:** There were three reports in August, all lacking details.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** The only report was an adult found at Jester P *Polk* 7 Sep (SJD, JG).

**Sanderling:** First: 1 on 3 Aug at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JB), where the peak of 67 occurred 4 Sep (DA, SJD, JG), and the last occurred 19 Oct (JB). Also reported from Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP) and Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (ET).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** 100 on 6 Aug at Diamond L *Dickinson* (MCK) included the first mention of juvs. The only other large group was 124 on 2 Sep at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD). The last few were 5 on 11 Oct at Teal Basin *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 1 on 25 Oct at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG-details).

**Western Sandpiper:** Single juvs were at Saylorville Res *Polk* on 14 Aug, 28 Aug and 7 Sep (RIA, PHA, SJD), and 1–3 were at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 29, 30 Aug (DP).

**Least Sandpiper:** Many reports of small numbers except 200 at Diamond L *Dickinson* 6 Aug (MCK), 203 at Saylorville 2 Sep (SJD, AB), and 98 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 11 Oct (JG). The last would have been 6 at Red Rock 9 Nov (AB) except for a small group of holdouts in *Woodbury* that stayed through the end of the season, foraging on ice (POR, BFH, TLU).

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Most: 31 on 4 Sep at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD, BE). Last: 1 on 6 Sep at Jester Park *Polk* (DP). Also reported from *Johnson* (DP), *Kossuth* (MCK), *Woodbury* (TLU), and *Winneshieck* (DC).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Notable numbers were reported only in central Iowa. 1,090 at Saylorville on 26 Aug (AB) grew to 3,147 by 28 Aug (SJD). Another 750 were at Moeckley Prairie *Polk* 17 Aug (BE). Otherwise, there were few reports and numbers were down. The last 6 were at Rock Creek SP *Jasper* 2 Nov (JG, DP).

**Dunlin:** There were only two reports involving 26 birds: 4 on 10 Oct at Jester P *Polk* (JG), and 22 on 18 Oct along the Des Moines R *Marion* (AB).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Reported from seven locations, mostly along the Des Moines R reservoir system. High counts were 107 on 30 Aug at Red Rock Res *Marion* (SJD), and up to 178 in the vicinity of Saylorville 6–10 Sep (BE, JB, JG, SJD). The last was a lone bird on 11 Oct at Teal Basin *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** All: 1–3 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* throughout Aug (DP), 1–5 at Dairy Ponds and up to 15 near Sergeant Bluff *Woodbury* 4 Aug–6 Sep (TLU, GLV), 1 in Ames *Story* 5 Aug (SJD), 2 at Blackmore sod farm *Cerro Gordo* 7 Aug and 7 Sep (CJF, RG), 14 at Red Rock Res *Marion* 30 Aug (JG, SJD), and up to 15 at a time at Saylorville Res *Polk* (m.ob) with the last 1 there 27 Sep (JG, SJD).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Except for 3 on 10 Sep at Pinchey *Marion* (JG), all reports were of single birds. The last was a record late juv in Ames *Story* 23–25 Sep (SJD).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** All: 20 on 11 Oct at Jemmerston Sl *Dickinson* (PH), 5 on 11 Oct at Teal Basin *Cerro Gordo* (PH), 63 on 16 Oct at Saylorville (SJD), 19 on 18 Oct in *Woodbury* (POR), and 10 on 10 Oct at Polk City WA *Polk* (RLC).

**Wilson's Snipe:** Groups of between 15–33 birds were reported 27 Sep–11 Oct. Outside that window, all reports were of less than 10 birds.

**American Woodcock:** Last two: 1 on 1 Nov at Wintergarden *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 1 on 2 Nov in *Decatur* (NJM). Another was found dead on 2 Nov at Nevada *Story* (Janet Roley *vide* SJD).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** All: 3 juvs on 6 Aug at Diamond L *Dickinson* (MCK), 1–9 at



Moeckley Prairie *Polk* 12–17 Aug (DP, AB), 1 on 23 Aug at Dairy Ponds *Woodbury* (GLV, TLu), and 1 on 3 Sep in *Johnson* (DP).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** First: 3 on 9 Aug at Elk Creek M *Worth* (CJF). Last: 2 juvs on 27 Sep at Jester P *Polk* (JG, SJD). There were nine reports of 1–6 birds, and 1 report of 38 on 27 Aug at Diamond L *Dickinson* (LAS).

**RED PHALAROPE:** An adult in basic plumage was at Jester P *Polk* on 26 Sep (\*SJD), and another was at Red Rock Res *Marion* 25 Oct (\*JG). These are Iowa's 19th and 20th records, all occurring in the fall.

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:** An adult and a juv were found the morning of 30 Oct at Saylorville Res *Polk* by Cory Gregory, and stayed through 5 Nov (\*AB-photo, \*JB-photo, \*POR, \*JM-photo). A second juv, distinct from the Saylorville juv, was at Red Rock Res *Marion* 8, 9 Nov (\*JG-photo, AB).

**Sabine's Gull:** All reports were of juvs: Up to three at a time at Saylorville Res *Polk* 14 Sep–5 Oct (AB, DA, DP, JG, KDy, PHA, RIA, SJD); 3 on 21 Sep at Red Rock Res *Marion* (SJD, JG); 1 on 4 Oct at Spirit L *Dickinson* (JG).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** Some high counts were 60 on 22 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM) and 64 on 9 Nov at Rathbun *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Black-headed Gull:** The Spirit L adult returned in July (Dinsmore 2008) and was consistent at the north end (m.ob) until 25 Oct (KVS).

**LAUGHING GULL:** Two first-year birds were found in mixed gull flocks—1 in a flooded field near the Mississippi R *Des Moines* 14 Aug (\*JWR), and another below the Red Rock dam *Marion* 18 Oct (\*AB-photos).

**Franklin's Gull:** Already on 1 Aug there were 6,000 in *Dickinson* (SJD). By 29 Sep there were 8,600 in *Calhoun* (SSP), and 15,500 at Spirit L on 4 Oct (JG). Num-

bers peaked 9–11 Oct with 5,000 at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), 34,000 at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD), and 38,310 downstream at Red Rock (JG). The last was 1 on 21 Nov at Saylorville (SJD).

**Ring-billed Gull:** Most: 18,000 on 21 Nov at Saylorville (SJD).

**CALIFORNIA GULL:** An adult was at Saylorville Res *Polk* 2 Aug (\*SJD-photo, JG), and another was at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* 23 Oct (\*KDy-photo).

**Herring Gull:** Fall reports began on 29 Sep with 1 at Saylorville (DA).

**Thayer's Gull:** All: An adult on 10 Nov at Lizard L *Pocahontas* (SSP), a sub-adult on 15 Nov in *Appanoose* (RLC), an adult on 16 Nov at Red Rock *Marion* (AB), an adult and a juv 21–26 Nov at Saylorville *Polk* (SJD, AB), and a juv on 23 Nov at Red Rock (JG).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** A juv and an adult were at Saylorville *Polk* on 21 Nov (SJD), and a juv was at Red Rock *Marion* 30 Nov (SJD).

**Glaucous Gull:** An imm was at W Okobojo L *Dickinson* 21 Nov (ET).

**Least Tern:** 10 were counted at the MidAmerican Ponds *Pottawattamie* 23 Aug (DA).

**Caspian Tern:** Many reports of more than a dozen at a time at Saylorville Res *Polk*, including the high count of 182 on 8 Sep (JC), until the last there on 11 Oct (JB, SJD). Elsewhere, between 1–21 in *Cerro Gordo*, *Decatur*, *Hardin*, *Johnson*, *Kossuth*, *Linn*, *Marion*, *Story* until the last 3 on 18 Oct at Red Rock (AB).

**Black Tern:** Began moving out in late Aug. The last 200 on 29 Sep in *Decatur* were also the most (JLi).

**Common Tern:** All: 2 on 3 Sep at Saylorville (AB, JG), 1 on 12 Sep at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK), and 7 on 21 Sep at Red Rock Res *Marion* (SJD).

**Forster's Tern:** Most: 46 at Red Rock Res Marion on 30 Aug (SJD, JG). Last: 5 at Spirit L Dickinson 4 Oct (JG).

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** 56 on 5 Aug in Osceola Clarke was the largest cluster (AB). Sightings in Butler (SJD, JG), Bremer (JG), and Pocahontas (MHB) appear to bring to 81 the number of counties with records.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** 1 on 24 Oct at Ada Hayden P Story was getting very late (WO), but 1 on 1 Nov in Decatur (JLi) was 2nd-latest on record.

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** One was observed carrying food on 10 Aug at Sand Point Johnson (BSc). The last two were 1 on 6 Sep at Grammer Grove Marshall (MP), and 1 on 27 Sep at Cedar Bottoms Muscatine (SSP).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** There were a handful of scattered sightings involving at least 12 individuals of this underreported resident species.

**Snowy Owl:** Six reports were the most in fall since 1993: 24 Oct at Broken Kettle Plymouth (GLV, POR, TLu), 12–20 Nov at Clear L Cerro Gordo (CJF-photo, RG), 16 Nov at Ridgeway Winneshiek (Sharon Gerleman-photo *fide* DC), 21 Nov at Riverton Fremont (KDY-photo), 21 Nov in Adair (Linda Collings *fide* AJ), and 26 Nov in rural Ida (Mark Borchers *fide* DoP).

**Long-eared Owl:** First few: 1 on 12 Oct at Moorehead P Ida (DoP), 2 at Lime Creek Cerro Gordo (PH), followed by eight Nov reports. Most: 6 at Three Mile L Union (JS).

**Short-eared Owl:** There were three Oct reports of singles on 5 Oct at Errington M Polk (DP), 9 Oct at Neal Smith NWR Jasper (KVS), and 16 Oct in Decatur (NJM, JLi), followed by repeated Nov sightings at the same places, plus 1 on 9 Nov at Sparks Cemetery Boone (LGD).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** All: 1 or 2

during 23–28 Nov at Grammer Grove Marshall (MP, Linda Tasler, Jean Eige), and 1 on 30 Nov at Moorehead P Ida (DoP).

**Common Nighthawk:** The most was 400 on 13 Sep at the Hitchcock tower Pottawattamie (MO). There were multiple counts in excess of 100 from various parts of the state, with the last large groups 170 on 23 Sep Kossuth (MCK), 130 on 24 Sep Story (KLP), and 121 on 25 Sep Cerro Gordo (PH). The last straggler, 1 on 30 Oct in Pottawattamie was 2nd-latest (MO).

**Whip-poor-will:** All: 1 on 7 Aug in Mason City (RG), 2 calling on 4 Sep at Stone SP Woodbury (BFH), 1 calling in Decatur 18–23 Sep (JLi, JRL), and the last also in Decatur on 27 Sep (NJM).

**Chimney Swift:** High count: 240 on 7 Sep at Ada Hayden P Story (JG). Last few: 15 on 9 Oct Tama (MP) and 20 on 12–14 Oct in Des Moines (AB, JB).

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Last: 1 on 15 Oct in Ames Story (Chelsea Berns *fide* SJD).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 880 migrants on 26 Sep at Hitchcock NC Pottawattamie (MO) was easily a record count for contemporary Iowa. Another 114 were counted on 19 Sep in Decatur (NJM).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Beginning with 1 on 17 Sep in Cerro Gordo (CJF), reports of 1–7 followed from 13 east and central counties plus Woodbury in the west.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** 1 on 28 Nov SW of Guthrie Center Guthrie (Jim Moreland *fide* SJD) was the most westerly report. Also reported from Allamakee, Boone, Clarke, Decatur, Des Moines, Hancock, Marshall, Warren.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** The first was 1 on 2 Aug at Medicine Creek Wayne (AB). Widely reported with the last 1 on 21 Sep in Polk (POR).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** 11 were count-

ed in Brookside P *Story* on 8 Sep (SSP). The last 3 were in *Decatur* on 30 Sep (NJM).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** One was 3rd-earliest on 11 Aug in Cedar Rapids (BSc). The only other Aug bird was 1 on the 30th at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). The last 4 were on 20, 21 Sep in *Bremer*, *Black Hawk*, and *Marion* (SJD, JG).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** The last report was a family group of 10 on 24 Aug in *Decatur* (JLi) with adults still feeding young.

**Alder Flycatcher:** The last two were still singing, 1 on 16 Aug in *Marshall* and 1 on 17 Aug in *Decatur* (MP, JLi).

**Willow Flycatcher:** An *Empidonax* mist-netted on 29 Aug in *Story* was probably this species (SJD).

**Least Flycatcher:** The last one vocalizing was in Algona on 17 Sep (MCK). A silent, stubby-winged empid in Mason City on 27 Sep was most likely this species (PH).

**Eastern Phoebe:** One on 20 Oct was the latest ever for DC in *Winneshiek*, but there were three later reports on 21, 28, 30 Oct, the last in *Decatur* (WO, SSP, JLi).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** The last few were 5 on 15 Sep in *Tama* (SSP) and 2 on 20 Sep in *Decatur* (JLi).

**Western Kingbird:** All: 6 on 4 Aug near Sergeant Bluff *Woodbury* (TLu), 2 on 23 Aug in *Pottawattamie* (DA), 1 on 30 Aug at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO), and 1 on 15 Sep at Kettleston Hogsback *Dickinson* (BSc).

**Eastern Kingbird:** There were no really large movements reported. The last two sightings were 1 on 26 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM) and 3 on 27 Sep at Summerset *Warren* (JS).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** Outside of the southern tier of counties, the only report was 1 on 28 Sep in *Tama* (SSP).

**Northern Shrike:** First: 1 on 17 Oct at Lower Morse L *Wright* (Curtis Fisher-photo

*fide* SJD). Reported from 17 counties, including 4 on 24 Oct at Broken Kettle Grasslands *Plymouth* (GLV, POR).

**White-eyed Vireo:** All: 1 on 3 Sep at Sand Springs *Hardin* (MP), 1 on 14 Sep at Maynes Grove P *Franklin* (JG), and 1 on 21 Sep at Sycamore Access *Polk* (KVS).

**Bell's Vireo:** All: 3 on 2 Aug at Medicine Creek *Wayne* (AB), 1 on 7 Aug at Lime Creek *Cerro Gordo* (CJF), 1 on 23 Aug in *Pottawattamie* (DA), and 2 on 31 Aug at Jester P *Polk* (BE).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Two adults were attending young on 2 Aug in *Story* (HZ). The last was in *Decatur* on 3 Oct (NJM, JRL).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** The first was 1 on 29 Aug in *Story* (SSP). There were no reports from the western one-third of the state. The last few were on 11 Oct in *Marshall* (MP) and 12 Oct in *Clarke* (JG).

**Warbling Vireo:** The last was 2nd-earliest on 29 Sep at Lincoln Access *Polk* (DA).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** First found on 6 Sep at three different locations: Sycamore Access *Polk* (DA), River Valley P *Story* (SSP), and Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). The 17 reports all came from the central and eastern counties, with the last 2 on 28 Sep in *Johnson* (DP) and *Decatur* (NJM).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** The last was 1 on 3 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM, JRL).

**Blue Jay:** A wave of migrants passed through in late Sep: 320 on 24 Sep in *Kossuth*, 232 on 27 Sep in *Polk*, and 235 on 30 Sep in *Muscatine* (MCK, SJD, SSP). In the west, on 29 Sep, hawk watchers counted 2,295 from the Hitchcock tower *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Black-billed Magpie:** Twelve were seen at the Broken Kettle Grasslands *Plymouth* on 7 Aug and thought to be two or three family groups (TH-photo). 1 or 2 were there on 24, 28 Oct (POR, GLV).

**Purple Martin:** High counts were 300 on 23 Aug at Jester P *Polk* (JB), and 508 on 1 Sep at the NW corner of Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET). The last 2 were at Jester P on 12 Sep (JB).

**Tree Swallow:** 2,500 were swarming at USNWR *Kossuth* as early as 13 Aug (MCK); by 9 Sep 8,375 were at Saylorville (SJD), and another 6,000 were along the Iowa R in *Tama* on 14 Sep (SSP); numbers peaked twice in Oct with 12,000 at Saylorville 4 Oct and 9,875 there on 16 Oct (SJD). Last in the north was 1 on 23 Oct at Clear L *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and last in the state were 11 along the frozen Des Moines R *Marion* on 28 Nov (JS), a 2nd-latest date.

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** The only report was 40 on 4 Sep at Oak Grove RA *Polk* (DA).

**Bank Swallow:** 700 were counted in *Dickinson* on 1 Aug (SJD). The last 2 were along the Iowa R in *Tama* 9 Sep (SSP).

**Cliff Swallow:** 500 were counted in two groups in *Kossuth* on 13 Aug (MCK). The last 25 were at Oak Grove RA *Polk* on 4 Sep (DA).

**Barn Swallow:** 89 was the high count on 22 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM), and the last few were on 18, 19 Oct in *Tama* (SSP) and *Polk* (JB).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** There were 8 reports, but none from locations where nesting occurred during summer (Dinsmore 2008). The most was 7 at West Lake P *Scott* on 31 Oct (SSP).

**Brown Creeper:** First found 28 Sep at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* and also in *Decatur* (DP, NJM). As many as 9 were at West Lake P *Scott* on 31 Oct (SSP).

**Carolina Wren:** Eleven reports spanning the period, but none from the northern 3 tiers of counties.

**House Wren:** The last was in *Decatur* on 18 Oct (NJM, JRL).

**Winter Wren:** Two at Jester P *Polk* and 1 in *Decatur* on 28 Sep were the first (BE, SSP). Widely reported through the end of the season.

**Sedge Wren:** One was still singing at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 23 Aug (BFH). 27 were counted at Cedar Bottoms *Muscatine* 27 Sep (SSP). Stayed very late with 3 in *Linn* and 1 in *Story* on 25 Oct (BSc, WO), then 2 on 2–5 Nov in *Decatur* (NJM, JLi) were 2nd-latest for the fall. There is only one other Nov record.

**Marsh Wren:** As many as 19 were counted at Snake Creek M *Greene* 24 Aug–28 Sep. The last was at Buckshot M *Appanoose* on 11 Oct (RLC).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** One at Grammer Grove *Marshall* and another at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* on 1 Oct were the first two (RLC, JWR).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** First: 1 on 10 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP). Most: 46 on 2 Oct in *Grundy* (SJD).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** 13 were counted at River Valley P *Story* 26 Aug (SSP) and the last was at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* on 1 Oct (JWR).

**Eastern Bluebird:** Two impressive counts, both in *Plymouth*, were 65 on 14 Sep (DKy) and 100+ on 24 Oct (POR).

**Townsend's Solitaire:** The only report was a pair in the vicinity of the Hitchcock NC lodge *Pottawattamie* on 31 Nov (MO).

**Veery:** Slipped away during the night. A few nocturnal migrants were reported on 12–14 Sep from the central part of the state, and then all became quiet (SJD, JB, JG).

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** There were two sight-reports of this seldom-seen fall migrant: 1 on 1 Sep at Bailey's Ford *Dela-ware* (BSc), and 1 on 8 Sep at Brookside P *Story* (SSP). 22 were heard after dark on 12 Sep in *Story* (SJD), and 5 heard on 14 Sep at Caulkin's NC *Hardin* (JG).

**Swainson's Thrush:** The first was on 25 Aug at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RG), but it wasn't until a cold front passed through on 4 Sep that the next occurred in *Linn* (BSc). Peak movements occurred 12–14 Sep with 117 heard in Ames (SJD), 60 in Grimes (JB), and 79 at Caulkin's NC *Hardin* (SJD).

**Hermit Thrush:** The first was found on 1 Oct at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK-details) and another was at Holland M *Grundy* on 4 Oct (MP). There were only 11 reports from 9 counties; Sinclair remarked that they were very rare this fall. The high count was a mere 5 at Parkers Woods *Cerro Gordo* 20 Oct (RG).

**Wood Thrush:** All: A family group was at Call SP *Kossuth* 10 Aug (MCK); 2 were at Brookside P *Story* 8 Sep (SSP); 1 was discovered at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 21 Sep (MP).

**American Robin:** 4,600 were estimated in the skies off the Saylorville dam on 6 Nov (DA). 1,000 were still roosting at L Ahquabi SP *Warren* on the last day of the season (JS).

**Gray Catbird:** An unusual count of 31 was made in the vicinity of Riverview Cemetery in Algona 24 Sep (MCK). One was still in the city of Cherokee 27 Nov (DB).

**Northern Mockingbird:** All: 1 in *Indianola* on 3 Aug (JS); 6–9 in *Decatur* in early Sep and 1 still there 26 Nov (JLi, NHM); 1 at Three Mile L *Union* on 11 Nov (KDy); 1 at Lake Icaria *Adams* 21 Nov (JG).

**American Pipit:** First seen in the vicinity of Saylorville Res *Polk* 21 Sep (BE) where peak numbers were as high as 132 on 18 Oct and the last was seen 21 Nov (SJD). Away from Saylorville, some notable counts were 21 in *Woodbury* on 4 Oct (POR, TLu), 70 in *Jasper* 1 Nov (JG), and 50 at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* 3 Nov (DC).

**SPRAGUE'S PIPIT:** A first *Decatur* re-

cord was found just after dawn 28 Oct in a well-grazed cow pasture (\*BB).

**Blue-winged Warbler:** A trickle of reports ended 8 Sep with 1 in *Decatur* and another at Brookside P *Story* (NJM, SSP).

**Golden-winged Warbler:** A 2nd-earliest arrival was at McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* 8 Aug (CJF). The next was 2 weeks later on 24 Aug in *Polk* (KVS). The most was 8 on 7 Sep at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK), and the last was 1 on 21 Sep at Red Rock Res *Marion* (SJD).

**Tennessee Warbler:** The first was at Grammer Grove *Marshall* 30 Aug (MP), and the last was at Red Rock Res *Marion* 11 Oct (JG).

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** There were two early-Sep reports, then a 3-week delay until the next on 29 Sep (DA) in *Polk*, after which occurrences became almost daily. The most was 14 at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines on 12 Oct (RIC) setting a personal record for the observer. Last was 1 near Cedar Bottoms *Muscatine* on 29 Oct (SSP).

**Nashville Warbler:** The first was very early on 8 Aug at McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* (CJF) and was not succeeded until 3 Sep in *Iowa*, *Marshall*, and *Story* (DP, MP, SSP). As many as 40 were counted in the Loess Hills *Woodbury* 6 Sep (TLu). Reports ended 16 Oct in *Tama* (SSP), but 45 days later, on 30 Nov, a record late bird was found in *Woodbury* (POR).

**Northern Parula:** Most: 7 on 21 Sep at Red Rock Res *Marion* (SJD). Last: 2 on 24 Sep at Grammer Grove *Marshall* (MP).

**Yellow Warbler:** The last 3 were all seen 13 Sep in *Decatur*, *Butler*, and *Hardin* (NJM, JG, DP, MP).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Beginning with an early arrival on 8 Aug at McIntosh Woods SP in *Cerro Gordo* (CJF), very widely reported spanning 56 days until the last on 2 Oct in rural *Johnson* (SSP).

**Magnolia Warbler:** First: 1 on 26 Aug in Ames (SSP). Last: 1 on 8 Oct in Des Moines (JB).

**Cape May Warbler:** Five central Iowa reports spanning a 27-day period from 1 on 25 Aug (JB) to 1 on 21 Sep in Marion (SJD).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** A male at Silver Sioux RA *Cherokee* on 28 Sep was the first known county record (DB). There was 1 other male, on 6 Sep in Ames (SSP). The other 4 records were females: 13 Sep at Big Marsh *Butler* (SJD, JG), 13 Sep at Cross Ford P *Hardin* (DA), 13 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM), and 19 Sep at Pine Lake SP *Hardin* (MP).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** The first 2 were at Pine Lake SP *Hardin* on 19 Sep (MP). At least 100 were counted along the Shellrock Greenbelt in *Cerro Gordo* 4 Oct (PH), and reports of 20 or 30 were common throughout October.

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** The first was 1 on 28 Aug in Des Moines (JB). There were 20 reports from 13 counties with the most 11 on 6 Sep at Brushy Creek RA *Webster* (SJD), and the last 1 on 14 Oct at Indian Creek *Linn* (BSc).

**Blackburnian Warbler:** First: 24 Aug at Saylorville Res *Polk* (KVS). Last: 1 on 15 Sep in *Tama* (SSP). 16 in *Decatur* on 8 Sep (NJM) must have been a sight.

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** The last two were on 5, 6 Sep in Des Moines (JB, JG).

**Pine Warbler:** The only report was a juv on 20 Aug in Iowa City (JES-details).

**PRAIRIE WARBLER:** 1 was photographed at Brushy Creek RA *Webster* 6 Sep (\*SJD).

**Palm Warbler:** First noticed at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* on 20 Sep (PH), it was the latest warbler species to arrive. Not common, it was reported only 7 times dur-

ing a 16-day period with the last 2 in *Muscatine* on 5 Oct (SSP).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** The first was at Walnut Woods SP *Polk* on 3 Sep (JG). The most was 8 on 15 Sep at Brookside P *Story* (SSP), and the last 2 were in *Decatur* on 2 Oct (NJM).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** Reported at three locations during a brief 10-day window: 1 on 4 Sep and again on 13 Sep at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO), 1 at Squaw Creek P *Linn* 5 Sep (BSc), and 3 in *Decatur* during 8–13 Sep (NJM).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** After a couple of summer reports (Dinsmore 2008), the first likely migrant was the bird on 15 Aug at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* (Lee Zieke *fide* DC). It became hard to miss by 8 Sep when birders found 9 in *Polk*, 18 in *Decatur*, and 23 in *Story* (DA, NJM, SSP). The last would have been the one DP found on 28 Sep at Hickory Hill P *Johnson*, had it not been for a record late bird that appeared on the ISU campus in Ames on 25 Nov (MW-details).

**American Redstart:** The last was a female on 3 Oct at Maynes Grove P *Franklin* (SJD).

**Prothonotary Warbler:** One was found near Conesville *Muscatine* on 2 Aug (SSP), and another at Easter L *Polk* on 8 Oct was record-late by a full month (\*BN).

**Ovenbird:** There were two unusually late reports. A first record for November occurred in Des Moines on 1 Nov near Capital Square, and stayed 8 days (Diane Dentlinger, DTh). Then, on 15 Nov, one was photographed amidst snow-encrusted leaves in my Mason City yard (PH), making the Des Moines bird 2nd-latest on record.

**Northern Waterthrush:** The first was found at Waterworks P *Polk* on 9 Aug (RIC), 21 days before the next on 30 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DP). Reports were intermittent through Sep with none

coming from the western half of the state. The last was 1 at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* on 24 Sep (DP).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** All: One was at Slip Bluff P *Decatur* on 4 Aug (AB), and another was below the Saylorville dam *Polk* on 5 Aug (SJD).

**Kentucky Warbler:** The only report was 1 on 8 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM).

**Connecticut Warbler:** No reports.

**Mourning Warbler:** There were eleven birds from five locations. At Grammer Grove *Marshall*, 1 on 27 Aug, 2 on 1 Sep, 1 on 3 Sep and 1 on 10 Sep (MP); from Burr Oak *Winneshiek*, 1 on 27 Aug and 1 on 5 Sep (Lee Zieke *fide* DC); 2 on 5 Sep at Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc); 1 on 8 Sep at Brookside P *Story* (SSP); and 1 on 12 Sep in *Algona Kossuth* (MCK).

**Common Yellowthroat:** The last procrastinator was at Ada Hayden P *Story* 6 Oct (WO).

**Wilson's Warbler:** One was 2nd-earliest on 8 Aug at McIntosh SP *Cerro Gordo* (CJF). More typical reports began on 23 Aug and continued almost daily through 8 Sep (m.ob). The last was 1 on 27 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM).

**Canada Warbler:** The first 2 were at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* on 23 Aug (RG). There were 18 reports from 11 central and eastern counties, with the last 1 on 24 Sep at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (DP).

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** No reports.

**Summer Tanager:** The last 2 were in *Decatur* on 3 Oct (NJM, JLi, JRL).

**Scarlet Tanager:** Six were found on 24 Aug in *Decatur* (JLi). The last was 1 on 2 Oct at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB).

**Spotted Towhee:** All: 1 on 11 Oct at Oak Grove RA *Polk* and a repeat sighting there 2 Nov (AB, JG), 1 on 12 Oct at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (KVS), and 1 on 30 Nov in *Woodbury* (POR).

**Eastern Towhee:** There were widely scattered reports throughout the period.

**American Tree Sparrow:** One was record-early by two days on 4 Oct in rural *Warren* (JS). The next was also early on 10 Oct in *Decatur* (JRL). The median arrival date over the last 15 years is 19 Oct.

**Chipping Sparrow:** There were five Nov reports, with the last an adult on 25 Nov in *Algona* (MCK), the latest fall date I can find on record.

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** All: 1 in *Decatur* on 20 Sep and 2 there on 8 Oct (NJM), 1 at Maynes Grove P *Franklin* on 3 Oct (SJD), 2 on 12 Oct in *Warren* (JS), and 1 at Walnut Woods SP *Polk* on 12 Oct (JG).

**Field Sparrow:** The most was 12 on 11 Oct in *Boone* (LGD), and the last was 1 on 8 Nov in *Decatur* (NJM).

**Vesper Sparrow:** The last was on 7 Nov in *Decatur* (NJM).

**Lark Sparrow:** One on 16 Sep near Conesville *Muscatine* was 3rd-latest (SSP).

**Savannah Sparrow:** As many as 70 were at Buckshot M *Appanoose* 11 Oct (RLC). The last 24 were in *Decatur* on 24 Oct (NJM).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** The last was a pocket of 10 in *Decatur* on 14 Oct (JLi).

**Henslow's Sparrow:** A juv still on the Livingston farm in *Decatur* on 29 Oct was 2nd-latest (NJM-details).

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** The first arrivals were found 28 Sep at two locations: 3 at Bjorkboda Marsh *Hamilton* (BSc) and 15 at Snake Creek M *Greene* (DTh). It was reported from 22 locations in 17 counties with most coming during the period 11–24 Oct (m.ob). The last three were singles on 2 Nov in *Clay*, 4 Nov in *Warren*, and 14 Nov in *Decatur* (LAS, RTi, NJM).

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** The first few were 1 at Cardinal M *Winneshiek* on 20 Sep (PH-photo), and 2 at Cedar Bot-



toms *Muscatine* on 27 Sep (SSP-details). Between 1–6 were reported from 13 counties, with the last 6 at Sedan *Appanoose* on 18 Oct (TJ).

**Fox Sparrow:** First few: 1 on 30 Sep at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO), 2 on 2 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM), and 1 on 2 Oct in *Woodbury* (TLu). Some high counts were 34 on 24 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM), and 17 on 9 Nov in *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Song Sparrow:** As many as 80 were near Cedar Bottoms *Muscatine* on 29 Oct (SSP).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** The first was 1 on 7 Sep at Bailey's Ford P *Delaware* (BSc). The highest counts occurred 8–18 Oct with 12 at Sedan *Appanoose*, 12 at Big Creek *Polk*, and 28 in *Decatur* (RLC, SJD, NJM). The last 2 were at L Rathbun *Appanoose* on 9 Nov (RLC).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Some high counts were 90 at Buckshot M *Appanoose* 18 Oct (RLC) and 136 at Errington M *Polk* on 5 Oct (BE).

**White-throated Sparrow:** The first was found accompanying a warbler fallout 5 Sep at Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc). Some high counts were 106 on 7 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM), and 150 in the vicinity of Otter Creek M *Tama* 16–18 Oct (SSP).

**Harris's Sparrow:** The first one, in *Decatur* on 1 Oct (JLi, NJM), was 10 days later than the median arrival over the last 20 years. The most was 14 on 7 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** First few: 2 on 29 Sep in *Decatur* (NJM), 1 on 30 Sep at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO), 1 on 30 Sep at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (DP). Some high counts were 18 on 8 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM), 12 on 11 Oct near Mockridge WA *Clinton* (SSP), and 12 on 12 Oct at Riverton *Fremont* (KDy).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** The first one, on

29 Sep at Grimes *Polk*, was 10 days later than the median arrival date over the last 20 years. RLC counted 156 in the L Rathbun area *Appanoose* 9 Nov.

**Lapland Longspur:** First was a group of 1,500 on 26 Oct in rural *Emmet* (PH). Other high counts were 1,900 on 9 Nov in *Osceola* (PH), and 5,000 on 7 Nov in *Howard* (KDy).

**Smith's Longspur:** First few: 4 on 11 Oct in *Dickinson* (PH), 11 on 18, 19 Oct at Sandhill L *Woodbury* (TLu), 2 on 20 Oct near Lizard L *Pocahontas* (SSP). Also reported in *Page* (KDy) and *Decatur* (NJM). The most was 50 on 28 Oct in *Woodbury* (POR), and the last was a group of 25 on 16 Nov in *Decatur* (JLi).

**Snow Bunting:** The first were 2 on 29 Oct at the north end of Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET). Arrived on the shores of Saylorville Res *Polk* 1 Nov (JB) where the most was 63 on 23 Nov (BE).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** The last was at a *Jasper* feeder during the last 5 days of Nov (DTh).

**Blue Grosbeak:** The last reports all came on 23 Aug from west coast counties: 1 in *Pottawattamie* and 7 in *Fremont* (DA), and 1–3 in *Woodbury* (TLu, BFH).

**Indigo Bunting:** Last: 2 on 11 Oct at Sedan *Appanoose* (RLC), and 1 on 12 Oct in *Decatur* (NJM).

**Dickcissel:** The last was 1 on 18 Oct at Luton WMA *Woodbury* (TLu).

**Bobolink:** Most: 56 on 27 Sep at Cedar Bottoms *Muscatine* (SSP). Last: 1 on 11 Oct at Errington M *Polk* (SJD), and 1 on 13 Oct in *Decatur* (JLi).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** As many as 100 were in *Decatur* on 1 Oct (JLi). The last vocalizing was heard 11 Oct at Sedan *Appanoose* (RLC). The last meadowlark was reported 9 Nov.

**Western Meadowlark:** 9 were still in

*Decatur* on 31 Oct (NJM). The last meadowlark was reported on 9 Nov.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** A lone straggler was at the Brenton Feedlot *Dallas* on 23 Nov (JB).

**Rusty Blackbird:** First few: 1 on 4 Oct at Spirit L *Dickinson* (JG), 20 on 6 Oct at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Very widely reported with some high counts of 275 on 17 Oct in *Tama* (SSP), 200 on 1 Nov in *Sac* (POR, TLu), 300–500 on 7, 8 Nov in *Polk* (KDY, DTh).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** All: 27 on 20 Oct at So Twin L *Calhoun* (SSP-details), up to 60 in *Decatur* 25–29 Oct (NJM, JLi), 8 on 2 Nov in *Palo Alto* (LAS), 11 on 7 Nov in *Calhoun* (POR), 3 on 8 Nov in *Marion* (JG), 2 on 22 Nov in *Warren* (AMJ), and a pair at the Brenton Feedlot *Dallas* on 23 Nov (JB).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Reported from eight counties, with the easternmost 2 at South Sycamore Bottoms *Johnson* on 1 Sep (DP). The most was 45 on 17 Oct near *Tama* *Tama* (SSP).

**Orchard Oriole:** The only report was 2 on 23 Aug in *Pottawattamie* (DA).

**BULLOCK'S ORIOLE:** Iowa's 5th record of this species was a male that was present 8–15 Sep at Art Check's home south of Nevada *Story* (\*AC-photo, \*SJD-photo, JG-photo, DP).

**Baltimore Oriole:** A late bird was in the Thelen yard in Spirit L *Dickinson* on 26 Nov (ET).

**Purple Finch:** The first 8 were at Burr Oak *Winneshiek* 11 Sep (DC). As many as 130 were in Ankeny *Polk* 13 Nov (DA).

**Red Crossbill:** All: 5 on 27 Oct at NI-ACC campus *Cerro Gordo* (PH), 2 on 12 Nov in Cherokee *Cherokee* (DB), 1 on 16 Nov in Spirit L *Dickinson* (ET), and 1–3 at Hooper WA *Warren* 16–30 Nov (JS).

**White-winged Crossbill:** All: 4 on 28 Nov at Matsell Bridge WA *Linn* (JF).

**Common Redpoll:** A lone female on 9 Nov in Cherokee *Cherokee* (DB) was first. Following were small numbers on 13 Nov in Ankeny *Polk* (DA), 17 Nov in Bronson *Woodbury* (TLu), and 23 Nov in Lime Springs *Howard* (Larry Reis *vide* DC).

**Pine Siskin:** The first 3 on 28 Sep in Algona *Kossuth* (MCK) were harbingers. There were 36 reports from 18 counties, totaling about 500 birds. Many counts exceeded 20, but the most was 72 on 30 Nov at Sparks Cemetery *Boone* (LGD).

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** A Cedar Rapids feeder bird on 22 Nov was apparently a first county record for *Linn* (Bill Tollefson *vide* BSc). Other reports came from *Clinton*, *Johnson*, *Muscatine* (SSP-details, DP). The most was 17 in Pleasant Valley Twp *Johnson* (SSP).

## COMMENT

This article is based on information contributed by 72 field observers from five states, whose names are listed below. They submitted a total of 3,015 reports, including many details, photos, and documentations, for which I am very grateful. These reports came from 80 of Iowa's 99 counties, although 60% of them were from nine counties—Polk, Decatur, Story, Johnson, Woodbury, Cerro Gordo, Marion, Marshall, and Dickinson (listed in order of greatest frequency).

Summarized here is the presence of 273 species found in Iowa from 1 August to 30 November, 2008. There were 17 common, year-round residents for which at least some data were submitted, but which are not included here. These species are Wild Turkey, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy

Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Horned Lark, Tufted Titmouse, Brown Thrasher, European Starling, Cedar

Waxwing, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and American Goldfinch.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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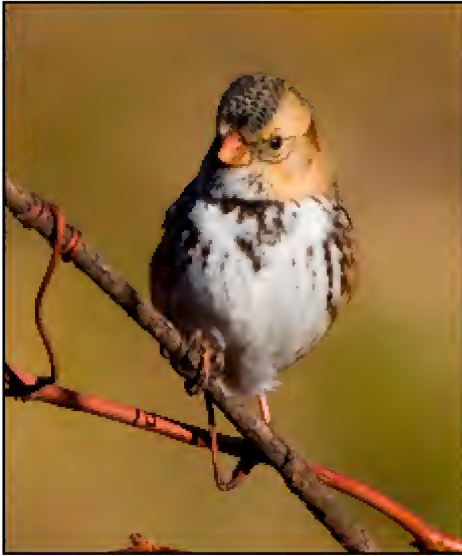
Danny Akers	DA	Ankeny	Jason McCurdy	JDM	Coralville
Pam Allen	PHA	West Des Moines	Nathan Miller	NJM	Davis City
Reid Allen	RIA	West Des Moines	Jim Moreland	JM	Boone
Ben Baldwin	BB	Davis City	Lyle Neher	LN	Grundy Center
Dick Bierman	DB	Cherokee	Jacob Newton	JN	Ottosen
John Bissell	JB	Grimes	Bob Norris	BN	Des Moines
Carol Boote	CB	Hull	Wolfgang Oesterreich	WO	Ames
Aaron Brees	AB	Des Moines	Mark Orsag	MO	Gretna, NE
Mark Brown	MHB	Iowa City	Nick Osness	NO	Ames
Dennis Carter	DC	Decorah	Katy Patterson	KLP	Ames
John Cecil	JC	Des Moines	Shane Patterson	SSP	Ames
Robert Cecil	RIC	Des Moines	Diana Pesek	DP	Cedar Rapids
Douglas E Chapman	DEC	Sioux Falls, SD	Don Poggensee	DoP	Ida Grove
Art Check	AC	Nevada	Mark Proescholdt	MP	Liscomb
Raymond Cummins	RLC	Centerville	Mary M Richard	MMR	Coralville
Larry Dau	LGD	Boone	Tommie Rogers	TR	Rock Port, MO
James J Dinsmore	JJD	The Villages, FL	Paul Roisen	POR	Sioux City
Stephen J Dinsmore	SJD	Ames	John Rutenbeck	JWR	Burlington
Keith Dyche	KDy	Shenandoah	James E Scheib	JES	Iowa City
Chris Edwards	CRE	Solon	William Scheible	BSc	Cedar Rapids
Bery Engebretsen	BE	Urbandale	Tom Schilke	TS	Waterloo
Carolyn Fischer	CJF	Mason City	Lee Schoenewe	LAS	Spencer
James Forde	JF	Cedar Rapids	Ross Silcock	RS	Tabor
Chuck Fuller	CF	Burlington	Jim Sinclair	JS	Indianola
Jacob Gilliam	JG	Norwalk	Ed Thelen	ET	Spirit Lake
Rita Goranson	RG	Mason City	Marty Thelen	MT	Carroll
Paul Hertzal	PH	Mason City	Dennis Thompson	DTh	Johnston
Torre Hovick	TH	Ames	Dan Tiemeier	DT	Centerville
Bill F Huser	BFH	So Sioux City, NE	Jerry Toll	JT	Omaha
Ann Johnson	AMJ	Norwalk	Richard Trieff	RTr	Indianola
Tom Johnson	TJ	Centerville	Karen Viste-Sparkman	KVS	Des Moines
Matthew Kenne	MCK	Algona	Gerald Von Ehwegen	GLV	Sioux City
Darwin Koenig	DK	Ankeny	Mark Widrlechner	MW	Ames
Jeff Livingston	JRL	Davis City	Hank Zaletel	HZ	Nevada
Josh Livingston	JLi	Davis City	Ric Zarwell	RWZ	Lansing
Tucker Lutter	TLu	Bronson	Walter Zuurdeeg	WMZ	Davenport

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## LITERATURE CITED

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*Harris's Sparrow*, Jester County Park, Polk,  
28 October 2008. Photograph by Reid Allen,  
West Des Moines, IA.



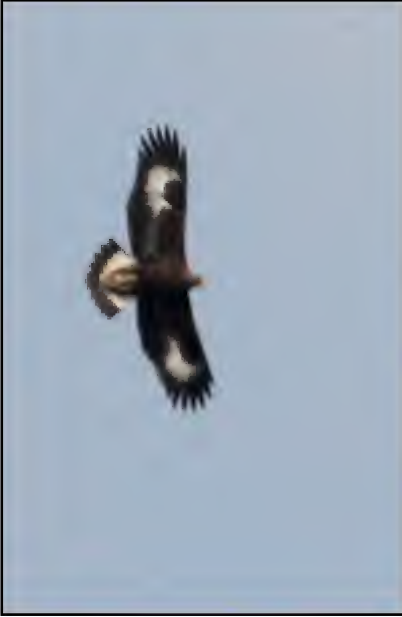
*Le Conte's Sparrow*, Errington Marsh, Polk,  
14 October 2008. Photograph by Reid Allen,  
West Des Moines, IA.



*Juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake*, Saylorville  
Reservoir, Polk, 3 November 2008. Photo-  
graph by Reid Allen, West Des Moines, IA.



*Fox Sparrow*, Jester County Park, Polk, 28  
October 2008. Photograph by Reid Allen, West  
Des Moines, IA.



*Juvenile Golden Eagle at Luther Bridge, Boone, 16 November 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Adult Black-headed Gull at "The Grade" at Spirit Lake, Dickinson, 4 October 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Red-necked Grebe at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk, 13 November 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake below Red Rock Reservoir dam, Marion, 8 November 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*





*Juvenile Brant on the North Iowa Area Community College campus in Mason City, Cerro Gordo, 27 November 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Red-tailed Hawk with dinner, three miles east of Monteith, Guthrie, 29 October 2008. Photograph by Jim Moreland, Boone, IA.*



*Juvenile Red-tailed Hawk, Hwy 44, five miles west of Guthrie Center, Guthrie, 27 October 2008. Photograph by Jim Moreland, Boone, IA.*



*Louisiana Waterthrush, below Saylorville dam, Polk, 5 August 2008. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.*



*Immature Pine Warbler,  
near Iowa City, Johnson,  
20 August 2008. Photo-  
graph by Jim Scheib, Iowa  
City, IA.*



*Great Blue Heron eating, Jester Park, Polk, 15 September 2008.  
Photograph by Jim Moreland, Boone, IA.*



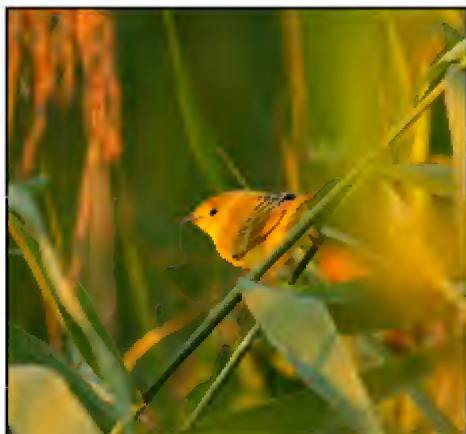
*Tennessee Warbler in Scheib yard, Iowa City, Johnson, 10 September 2008. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.*



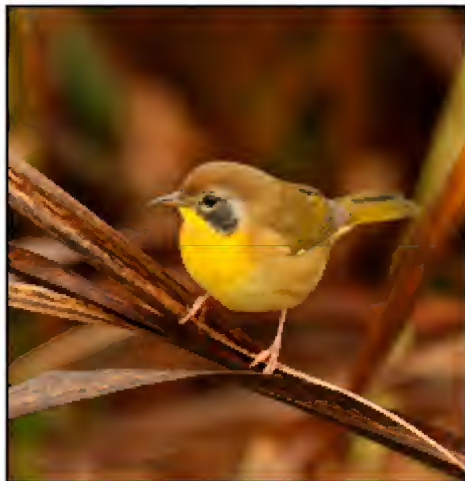
*Yellow-crowned Night-Heron along the Des Moines River west of Boone, Boone, 6 August 2008. Photograph by Jim Moreland, Boone, IA.*



*Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Luton WMA, Woodbury, 14 October 2008. Photograph by Tucker J. Lutter, Bronson, IA.*



*Yellow Warbler, Snake Creek Marsh, Greene, 24 August 2008. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*



*Common Yellowthroat, Snake Creek Marsh, Greene, 17 September 2008. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*





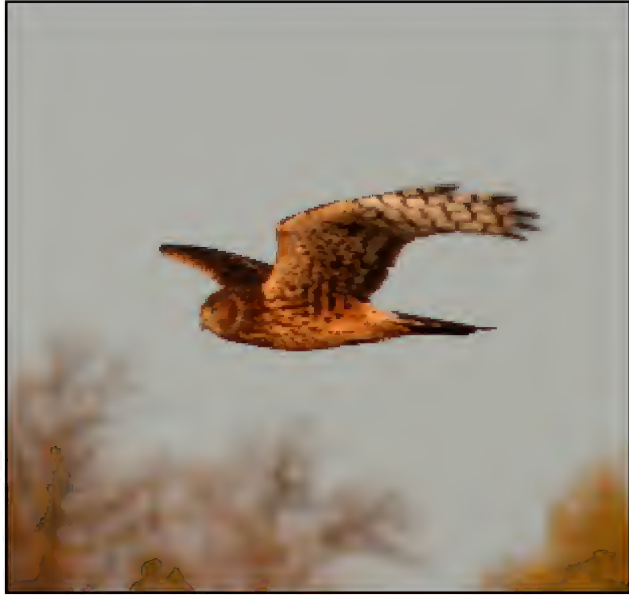
*Prairie Warbler at Brushy Creek RA, Webster, 6 September 2009. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.*



*Savannah Sparrow, Hale's Slough, Dickinson, 16 October 2008. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.*



*Virginia Rail, Snake Creek Marsh, Greene, 17 September 2008. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*



*Northern Harrier female, Welch Lake, Dickinson, 16 October 2008. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.*



*Sora, Snake Creek Marsh, Greene, 17 September 2008. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.*

# Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch and Banding, Fall 2008

*Mark Orsag*

## SEASON IN SUMMARY—THE YEAR OF THE STEADY FLIGHT

Statistics reveal much about this season. Overall, it was a decidedly average autumn for the Hitchcock Nature Center hawk watch (HNC): 10,715 raptors and vultures of 18 species were counted. Out of the six full-coverage count seasons at HNC (heretofore, FC = six full-coverage season of 1 September–20 December), the 2008 overall total ranks third. It wasn't a great year for rarities—we missed the Ferruginous Hawk for the first year in the Twenty-first Century, the highly irregular Black Vulture was again a no-show, many of the other rarer raptors posted lower-than-average counts, and the only real nonraptor rarities that turned up were two Townsend's Solitaires found by Elliott Bedows near the tower on Halloween. Of the nineteen generally annual raptor species, 10 posted below average counts and nine posted above average counts. In terms of over-arching raptor trends, there was only one really notable one—the eastern species were far more in evidence than the western ones in 2008. While not a single day record was set this fall for raptors, new one-day HNC records for migrant Red-headed Woodpeckers and Snow Geese were established. Season records, however, were set for Peregrine Falcons and Merlins. It was the year of the steady flight. There was no huge day of 800–1,000 (or more) raptors and vultures. Instead, we had five different days when daily totals fell within the narrow range of 516 to 534. There were ten days of 300 or more raptors and vultures. There were also 27 days when the flight ranged in the 100s–200s. The banding station caught more than 100 migrant raptors during the 2008 season.

Statistics reveal little about this season. Ryan Evans did a simply superb job as hawk counter this year (Figure 1). There are no statistics that can speak as eloquently to that as the effort put forward by the HNC staff and the HNC volunteers in arranging a (we hope temporary) farewell party for Ryan and his dog, Dog, in December. The overall effort and cooperation levels and camaraderie among the volunteers and staff in 2008 reached the highest levels that I can remember in the decade that I have been associated with HNC. After a couple quite slow seasons, this one felt very, very busy; that is always a good feeling at a hawk watch. As there were many busy south-wind days and low birds, great looks at passing raptors seemed almost routine this year. This was also the year that the impressive and informative exhibits in the remodeled and expanded nature center, and the superbly run (by the HNC staff) and well-attended hawk and eagle festivals seemed to all come together and make us feel very lucky indeed. There aren't any statistics for that either.

## THE SEASON IN DETAIL

### **August and September**

August began in a fairly routine manner. Eleven days of hawk watching beginning

on 16 August produced 53 hours of counting and 186 total raptors and vultures. As usual, immature Turkey Vultures dominated the early movement. For nonraptors, migration seemed to be off to a late start with Red-headed Woodpeckers putting in an above-average showing, but there were disappointing numbers of other early species (such as Eastern Kingbirds and American White Pelicans). Temperatures were generally in the 80s with moderate winds out of the south; the passing of the occasional weak Pacific cold front did little to shake up the calm pattern.



*Figure 1. Ryan Evans, hawk counter, gathering weather data on top of Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch tower, Pottawattamie, on 12 December 2008. Photograph by Fritz Davis, Omaha, NE.*

Perhaps the most notable day of the month occurred on 20 August when 18 Turkey Vultures, five Red-tailed Hawks, and six American Kestrels (a promising early showing that was not to be born out by later events) were joined by a pair of adult Mississippi Kites that moved through together down the east ridge and past the ranger shop playfully dueling and tacking into the day's moderate southeasterly winds. Mark Orsag, who was joined by Jerry Toll later that day, also spotted two groups of three southwesterly bound Great Blue Herons—the first, after hearing croaking calls coming from high overhead in the late-summer blue sky. The month ended with 186 raptors and vultures counted, the third best August in HNC history.

Full-time counting began as usual on September 1, and 2008's HNC hawk counter Ryan Evans, along with his faithful canine, Dog, reported for duty on 4 September. Ryan would turn out to be one of the very best and most conscientious hawk counters that HNC has ever had (and be universally appreciated by the Hitchcock staff and volunteers). The first half of September was generally quite slow. A pattern of frequent weak cold fronts began to develop and cause unpleasant memories of the last two sub-par flight seasons in 2006 and 2007. There were, however, three promising days. On 1 September, Jori and Stan How and Fritz Davis were treated to a very early strong showing of Turkey Vultures (96) aided through by strong SSW winds in front of an approaching Pacific cold front. Four early Sharp-shinned Hawks joined the vultures for perhaps the oddest 100 bird day in HNC history. On 13 September, Fritz, this time joined by Jim Meyer and Sue Mattix, counted a highly varied flight (74) of eleven different species of raptors and vultures with the day's five Merlins being the highlight. Also taking advantage of the late afternoon passage of a strong Canadian cold front that day were 400 Common Nighthawks. The next day was cloudy and damp with blustery NW winds and "felt like November" to one of the hawk watchers present. Another diverse group of raptors arrived on 14 September—100 birds of 13 species. Highlights for Mark, Sandy Reinken, and Don Paseka included eight Ospreys, one Mississippi Kite, and two Peregrine Falcons; the nonraptor flight was dominated by a strong early showing of Double-crested Cormorants (580).



Prime-time began a bit early in 2008 with steady triple-digit flights starting on 17 September and continuing through the end of the month. Bird days of 100–350 were the rule. Missing almost entirely, however, were Swainson's Hawks (something that wouldn't be remedied in October either). A steady drumbeat of Turkey Vultures, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Broad-winged Hawks, however, kept HNC counters very busy. As south winds prevailed throughout most of the prime period in late September, there were also many days filled with low and close birds—in the words of one counter, “they stayed fairly low for the most part but would just pop up, as in a video game, singly, or in loose groups, or in small kettles as they hit the ridges close to the tower.” The three-day span between 24 and 26 September constituted the heart of the prime-time period and indeed the heart of the 2008 HNC flight. For counters Ryan Evans, Fritz Davis, Elliott Bedows, Jason McMeen, Jim Meyer, Clem Klaphake, and Kent Skaggs, circumstances couldn't have been much better or busier. On 24 September, a flight of 528 raptors and vultures of 10 species graced HNC as a weak low-pressure system moved through; skies were cloudy with light winds out of the northeast. Ninety-nine Turkey Vultures, 99 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 255 Broad-winged Hawks led the way with 900 Double-crested Cormorants and 102 Blue Jays dominating the day's nonraptor flight. On 25 September, the winds turned back to moderate-to-strong out of the southeast but cloudy conditions still prevailed. That day 415 raptors and vultures of 12 species passed the tower. The same three species dominated—Turkey Vulture (149), Sharp-shinned Hawk (66), and Broad-winged Hawk (149). The day wasn't a big one for nonraptors, but three Black-bellied Plovers winged past just after noon. The finest single day of the 2008 season was 26 September; 528 raptors and vultures passed the tower that day in what one counter referred to as a “constant flight without kettles” with most of the birds again in low and close, tacking into stiff southerly winds under sunny skies. Turkey Vultures (139), 90 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and 226 Broad-winged Hawks constituted the bulk of the flight. The nonraptor flight that day was also spectacular with a runaway HNC-record 880 Red-headed Woodpeckers plowing through in a three-hour span in the morning. During the same span, 2,295 Blue Jays were counted. In the early afternoon, kettles of American White Pelicans (730) appeared. On the whole, September 2008 was a steady and solid month with 4,111 raptors and vultures counted; it was the third best September in HNC history.

## October

October started off rather slowly with a very inactive weather pattern, and the big front that we were all hoping would finally bring decent numbers of Swainson's Hawks never materialized. By the end of the first week of the new month, hope for any sort of a meaningful Swainson's Hawk flight vanished. After a few days, however, HNC flights picked up as large numbers of Turkey Vultures continued to push through. On 5 October, Mark and Sandy (the Sunday crew in 2008) counted 310 raptors and vultures of eight different species. The birds moved through at low altitude, under cloudy skies and into moderate to strong southeast winds. Vultures were preceded by 550 Blue Jays in the morning. A mixed bag of days in the 100s and 200s followed, along with a few rainouts. The best day of this stretch occurred on 10 October when a flight of 254 raptors and Turkey Vultures (190) of six species moved through for Ryan, Jori, and Elliott on a sunny day that

once again featured a low altitude flight into moderate to strong southeast winds. On 13 October, a weak Pacific front passed through with rain and moderate northwest winds. As the rain began to slacken, Ryan climbed the tower. He was soon joined by Jonas Grundman, who had planned to spend the day helping Jerry Toll at the HNC banding station. For more than a four-hour span, Ryan and Jonas struggled to keep up with the constant stream of vultures and raptors moving overhead. By the end of the day, they had counted eight species and 518 individuals including a season high 361 Turkey Vultures and a promising 124 Red-tailed Hawks. Two days later, on 15 October, a much stronger Canadian front plowed through dropping temperatures into the lower 50s with strong NNW winds. The balance had now shifted, and this flight was dominated by Red-tailed Hawks (341); Turkey Vultures (129), even at this relatively late date, however, made a strong showing. The day kept Ryan, Fritz, Jason, and Don Paseka busy (11–12 A.M. featured 25 Turkey Vultures, five Northern Harriers, six Sharp-shinned Hawks, one Cooper's Hawk, 77 Red-tailed Hawks, and one Merlin); ending totals were seven species and 534 individuals.

The second half of October produced a decidedly mixed bag of days despite fronts clipping through at a fairly frequent rate. Two unusually big days, however, salvaged October's last two weeks. A fairly strong Pacific front blew through on 20 October for the Friday crew (certainly the 2008 season's busiest group of counters), Ryan, Elliott, Jason, and Jori. The front brought an impressive flight of 307 raptors and vultures of eight species. Red-tailed Hawks (192) were joined by 55 late Turkey Vultures and 45 Sharp-shinned Hawks. There were some less-common species sighted that day as well including a Merlin and a Red-shouldered Hawk. More than 1,300 southbound nonraptor migrants were counted including 926 American Crows, 200 Greater White-fronted Geese, 150 Double-crested Cormorants, 90 Ring-billed Gulls, and three very late Common Nighthawks. A powerful Canadian front blasted through on 26 October; howling northwest winds whipped the tower and counters Mark, Ryan, and Clem felt as if they were on a ship on stormy seas. One gust was clocked at 92.2 kpmh (about 58 mph)! Fast-moving streams of American Crows (7,600) rocketed through for much of the day and 516 raptors of eight species were counted. These included 35 Bald Eagles, 44 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and a season-high 401 Red-tailed Hawks. The season's first Rough-legged Hawk was picked out of a high scattered group of red-taileds and Bald Eagles, and an adult Prairie Falcon brought cheers as it banked past, just 30 feet above the heads of the counters. The HNC's annual "good luck" day, Halloween, brought a modest flight of raptors (83) and a solid showing by American Crows (1,700) for Ryan, Elliott, and Jori. Just when it seemed, however, that 31 October 2008 would break a remarkable run of HNC good luck, an alert Elliott Bedows spotted two Townsend's Solitaires below the tower in the late afternoon. One of the two birds later accommodated Ryan by perching at eye level for several minutes near the tower! On the whole, October, like September, had been a solid month: 4,944 raptors and vultures had been counted (the third best total for October in HNC history).

### **November and December**

November began with a mild stretch of weather that gave the late-season raptors little incentive to move south. On 7 November, however, HNC counters finally got the front that would kick-start a strong two day push of raptors and waterfowl. Once again, the Friday

crew (Ryan, Elliott, Jonas, and Jori) were at the center of the push and counted a 10-species/165-raptor flight. As the Canadian cold front pushed temperatures into the 30s and the winds were strong and steady from the WNW, 35 Bald Eagles, 21 Northern Harriers, and 94 Red-tailed Hawks comprised the bulk of a flight that also featured a Golden Eagle and a Merlin. Snow Geese poured through that day as well with 29,821 counted. On 8 November, the winds blew strongly again (this time out of the northwest), and the birds again blew (often flying sideways!) down the Loess Hills ridges. A six-species, 162 bird flight was recorded by Ryan, Sue, Fritz, Jerry Toll (who had just wrapped up the banding season), and highly knowledgeable guest Jim Sinclair. A total 51 Bald Eagles were joined by 97 Red-tailed Hawks with the day's highlights being a pair of Golden Eagles. On 8 November, it was another banner day for Snow Geese as well; the ending tally was 80,007. Another strong Canadian front came through on 14 November and, after a bit of rain and sleet in the morning, Ryan, Elliott, and Jori were entertained by the most spectacular Snow Goose flight in HNC history (326,500). The raptor flight was highly varied that day as well with 84 raptors of nine species (highlights included two Golden Eagles, two Merlins, a [late] Peregrine Falcon, and a Prairie Falcon). For the rest of November, flights remained poor to mediocre and December was just plain bad with the only really notable day being the last day of the count (20 December) when 49 raptors (37 Bald Eagles, two Northern Harriers, and 10 Red-tailed Hawks) closed out the season in style. Due largely to a sub-par Bald Eagle flight, the end of the season hadn't quite kept pace with beginning and middle. November 2008 was the third worst November at HNC, and December 2008 marked an all-time HNC low point for that month.

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Black Vulture** (0). This species, which turned up at HNC in September of 2002 and August of 2005, again failed to make an appearance in 2008. The Black Vulture seems to be a very irregular early season vagrant at the hawk watch.

**Turkey Vulture** (3,530). While 2008's total actually declined from the season record established in 2007, this fall's flight was still 13% above the six-year HNC average. Overall Turkey Vulture trends at HNC remain strongly positive with the three highest seasonal counts all coming in the last four years. Once again, heavy doses of strong southerly winds in late September and early October seem to have funneled large numbers of these big birds (which are very comfortable tacking into the wind while riding the updrafts created by the Loess Hills) past the tower. In another on-

going trend, the Turkey Vulture flight continued its steady shift later into the season with October being the peak month once again and the daily peak flight of 361 coming on 13 October (a record late apex). The last bird was seen on 9 November.

**Osprey** (135). Another updraft and south-wind favoring "tacker," the Osprey, like the Turkey Vulture, was seen in above average numbers at HNC in 2008. The 2008 season total of 135 Ospreys was 12% above the six-year average and the third best recorded at HNC during the FC period. Flight timing was in all ways normal. As usual, the HNC Osprey flight was strongly concentrated in September, with a total of 128 birds recorded that month. The first Osprey was seen on 26 August with the last being recorded on 23 October. The peak flight of 2008 occurred on 23 September when 23 Ospreys were recorded; 21 had

been counted the day before. Both 22 and 23 September were characterized by steady moderate to strong southerly winds. Osprey numbers seem to vary widely at HNC depending on weather conditions (particularly the prevalence of moderate to strong southerly winds and sunshine) and no firm conclusions about population trends can be made at this point.

**Bald Eagle** (741). While the 2008 season total was a rebound from the Bald Eagle disaster in 2007 (443), it was still 8% below the six-year HNC average. This continues a recent pattern of poor flights at HNC (the three worst FC totals at Hitchcock have come during the last three seasons) that contrasts sharply with a national picture of expanding Bald Eagle populations and strong flights at a number of other hawk watches across North America. The 2008 HNC flight manifested itself extremely strongly in October with an October record total of 131 early Bald Eagles logged at HNC that month, with 35 being counted on 26 October alone. November's peak monthly total was solid with more than 400 eagles being counted at HNC. The flight in December, despite numerous strong cold fronts, was, however, extremely disappointing with only 140 Bald Eagles tallied that month. At HNC, Bald Eagle flights seem generally to depend on two unique factors in addition to the weather and population dynamics. One is the strength of the Snow Goose flight (this rebounded strongly in 2008 at HNC after several years of poor flights). The other is the speed of the freeze of major lakes and rivers. By early December of 2008, little open water remained around HNC, and by the end of the season on 20 December, no open water remained. This situation presumably also prevailed to the north of the hawk watch and may well have given the eagles little time to stage and

fully utilize the Missouri River Valley/Loess Hills flight corridor. The 2008 HNC daily peak flight of 71 Bald Eagles occurred on 24 November.

**Northern Harrier** (206). After a very poor 2007 season total at HNC, the 2008 Northern Harrier flight continued recent unfavorable trends. The 2008 season total was a HNC record FC worst and 25% below the six-year average. In 2008, the first harrier was seen on 22 August, the last two were counted on 20 December (the 2nd year in a row that a harrier has been counted on the last day of the season), and the daily peak flight of 21 occurred slightly late on 7 November. October was the peak month. Good Northern Harrier flights are hard to predict at HNC and the seasonal totals often hard to explain in terms of any discernible patterns. Despite the very poor flights of the last two seasons, the six-year HNC full coverage pattern is similarly somewhat ambiguous and the data open to multiple interpretations.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** (1,112). The 2008 seasonal total for these adaptable little accipiters rebounded strongly from a record-worst HNC showing in 2007. In 2008, the season total was the second best recorded at HNC and a solid 11% above the six-year average. Other than the very poor showing in 2007 (766), sharp-shinned numbers have held steady at HNC. Flight timing in 2008 was normal with one or two notable trends. The first Sharp-shinned Hawk was recorded on 26 August, and September was the peak month by about 100 birds more than in October (in most past HNC seasons, the distribution between the two months has often been more even). Strong flights of between 20 to 99 Sharp-shinned Hawks occurred every day during a seven-day span in late September. The peak flight of 99 individuals took place on 24 September. The strong

count this fall and the shift back toward September could indicate a successful 2008 breeding season for this species as immature Sharp-shinned Hawks tend to migrate, on average, earlier than adults at HNC.

**Cooper's Hawk** (233). The year 2008 marked another solid flight year for the Cooper's Hawk at HNC with its third best total 4% above the FC average, overall trends for this species at HNC are demonstrably stable to positive with 2006–2008 aggregate counts 7% above the 2003–2005 average. The 200+ flights of Cooper's Hawks have occurred during every HNC FC season except 2003 (169). 2007 was the first year at HNC that October was the peak Cooper's Hawk flight month. In 2008, flight timing returned to the normal earlier pattern with September (161) once again the peak month for this species at HNC. The peak flight of 30 occurred on 26 September.

**Northern Goshawk** (4). While a slight recovery from the very poor flight of 2007 occurred in 2008, the total for this species was still 20% below the six-year HNC FC average. The first two goshawks of 2008, an adult and an immature, were seen within minutes of each other on 12 October. Single immature birds were later counted a month apart on 16 October and 16 November. The cyclic and irruptive migratory pattern of the Northern Goshawk is fairly well-known and understood, but the rarity of this species at HNC makes Hitchcock a poor bellweather of overall population trends for this species.

**Red-shouldered Hawk** (3). As with the Northern Harrier, 2008 was the worst season of the FC period at HNC for this species. This fall's season total of red-shoulders was 33% below the six-year HNC average. Again though, the red-shouldered is simply too rare a migrant at HNC for these data to be very informative about the overall population trends for these species.

Additionally, this year's tally involved some guess work on the part of counters. An adult Red-shouldered Hawk (the first of the 2008 season) was spotted characteristically low on the westerly (off-wind on that day) side of Northridge north of the tower on 19 October; it was seen repeatedly hazing a large but widely scattered, slow moving flock of Common Grackles that was battling moderate but steady headwinds as it moved south. As both hawk and flock disappeared low and behind the Knoll to the northwest of the tower, observers saw the red-shouldered seem to snag a grackle in accipiter-like fashion. The hawk didn't reappear that day (though it could have easily sneaked through unnoticed behind Westridge), and was assumed to be spending the afternoon dining on grackle. Both an adult and an immature red-shouldered were seen early the next day headed south. An immature, the last red-shouldered of the 2008 season, was then seen headed south early on 21 October. After considerable discussion, in which the red-shoulder's well-documented and confusing patterns (at HNC) of flying low, doubling back, etc. were discussed at length, HNC counters decided that a total of three birds spread over three days best reflected the events that were witnessed (as well as those that weren't).

**Broad-winged Hawk** (949). 2008 was a very strong season for Broad-winged Hawks at HNC. The season total was a whopping 39% above the FC average and the second highest in HNC history. Twelve dark-morph individuals were recorded in 2008. The broad-winged flight was even more concentrated in September (943) than usual. The last two individuals seen in 2008 were counted on 30 September. Though the huge Hurricane Katrina-influenced flight of 2005 confuses the six-year picture to some extent, it is possible to conclude from the

data that the broad-winged is exhibiting a positive pattern at HNC. The worst two counts were in 2003 and 2004, and the strong showing in 2008 marks the second straight increase.

**Swainson's Hawk** (164). The 2007 flight (419) of Swainson's Hawks was 75% below the HNC average. The 2008 season total (90% below the six-year average and less than 1/22nd of the record season total of 3,648 Swainson's Hawks recorded during the fall of 2005) was considerably fewer than totals that we recorded in single kettles during happier times for the HNC Swainson's flight. This was certainly the low point (along with the continued steep declines posted by the American Kestrel) of the 2008 HNC fall season. The first five Swainson's Hawks turned up rather late on 14 September, and September was the peak month. The peak daily flight of 98 occurred with normal timing on 30 September, and the last bird moved through just a bit early on 12 October. One dark-morph bird and one rufous-morph bird were seen this year. We are still trying to figure out what happened the last couple of years, a lot of what we thought we knew about Swainson's Hawk migration at HNC has been proven wrong. Weather almost certainly played a role this year as there were really no strong cold fronts at HNC during the narrow Swainson's Hawk migratory window (the last week of September and the first week of October). Additionally, the constant kettling and streaming companions of the Swainson's Hawk big pushes of past years—Franklin's Gulls—were also generally absent from HNC this fall. In aggregate, the results of the last three fall seasons of Swainson's Hawk flights were 74% below those of the previous three, though whether that indicates a shift in migratory patterns westward, a population decline, or

something else is unknown. This will probably be the most fascinating question that we will try to answer in fall 2009.

**Red-tailed Hawk** (3,352). The Red-tailed Hawk flight in fall 2008 strongly rebounded from a dismal showing in 2007 at HNC. The 2008 flight was a mere seven birds (0%) above the six-year average. Over the FC span at HNC, Red-tailed Hawk flights have also been fairly steady (with a strong year in 2005 and a weak year in 2007). On the whole though, population trends for this highly adaptable species, as indicated by HNC's fall migratory flights, seem stable at quite robust levels. Flight timing in 2008 was somewhat on the late side with the peak flight (401) occurring on 26 October. October was, as always, the peak flight month for this species. Ten Krider's, 33 Harlan's, two Harlan's light morphs, 48 western dark morphs, two western rufous morphs, and 20 dark-morph indeterminate Red-tailed Hawks were recorded this season.

**Rough-legged Hawk** (39). The 2008 Rough-legged Hawk total at HNC was a welcome rebound from three years of below-average flights. Clocking in at 18% above the six-year average, this fall's flight posted the second highest total in HNC history. The flight timing was fairly normal. The first Rough-legged Hawk was seen on 26 October, and the peak flight of seven occurred on 19 December after the season's first sunny south wind day after a significant snowfall. November beat December as the peak month. Seven dark-morph Rough-legged Hawks were recorded; this amounted to 18% of the 2008 flight at HNC. This is normally about the percentage of dark-morphs that HNC records, and it may suggest that birds from the western North American Arctic (where dark-morph rough-leggeds are a much lower percentage of the population than in more eastern

regions) constituted a high proportion of 2008's flight. Longer-term trends for the Rough-legged Hawk at HNC are decidedly mixed.

**Ferruginous Hawk** (0). Going into 2008, we'd had a remarkable run of one- and two-bird seasons with these magnificent buteos at HNC, but they are casual or accidental rarities in Iowa, and even at the location in the state annually most likely to produce a sighting, our luck had to run out eventually. This year, it did.

**Golden Eagle** (15). While 2008 marked the second straight year of increases in Golden Eagle numbers at HNC, the 2008 season total was still 21% below the six-year average. The first Golden Eagle was spotted (somewhat early) on 28 September. November was, as usual, the peak month, and peak flights of two-bird-each occurred on three dates—8, 14, and 21 November. This multiple-peak flight phenomenon (often involving flights of two birds), has repeatedly been a distinguishing feature of the Golden Eagle flight over the years at HNC and occurred again in 2008. The last Golden Eagle recorded in 2008 at HNC was counted on 6 December. The trends for this species at HNC are somewhat ambiguous despite recent lower counts. This was, however, the lone generally south-wind-favoring species to post a below-average total in 2008 (though it must be noted that the Golden Eagle does not exhibit the same degree of preference for tacking as do the Osprey, Turkey Vulture, or Rough-legged Hawk, and that the Golden Eagle is a rarer migrant than these other species at HNC).

**American Kestrel** (84). The speed and depth of the decline of the American Kestrel at HNC accelerated greatly in 2008. Many new unwelcome milestones were reached. For the first time in HNC FC history, kestrel

season totals failed to reach 100 birds. The 2008 season total was a grim 31% below the six-year full coverage average. Aggregate counts for the most recent three seasons are, on average, 25% below those of the prior three seasons. It also must be noted that the best seasons for this species at HNC actually occurred when the watch was far less systematically covered than is currently the case. For example, in only 426 hours of coverage in 2002 (as opposed to more than 850 hours in 2008), the HNC hawk watch recorded 224 American Kestrels. The decline of the American Kestrel seems to be a continent-wide phenomenon that seems particularly acute at HNC. The highlight of the 2008 flight came on 24 September, when 20 American Kestrels were counted.

**Merlin** (54). 2008 was another boom year for this little falcon with the season total constituting a runaway new record and logging in 64% above the six-year average. The first two Merlins were spotted on 9 September, the peak flight of five occurred on 13 September, and the last was recorded on 24 November. The trend toward somewhat later migration that was first observed in 2007 continued this year with October once again being the peak month for Merlins at HNC. Trends for the Merlin at HNC are strongly positive. As usual, both *columbarius* and *richardsoni* individuals were recorded in 2008.

**Peregrine Falcon** (56). This count was another new season record for Hitchcock and 40% above the six-year average. Prevailing southerly winds during the peak of peregrine migration often produce good counts of this species at HNC, and that situation certainly occurred in 2008. September (44) was the peak month, and the daily high count of 10 was recorded on 23 September. Southbound Peregrine Falcons were recorded daily at HNC, over an 11-day span in



late September. The first peregrine of 2008 was counted on 22 August and the last on 14 November. As usual, both *tundrius* and *anatum* birds were recorded this year. Overall, the Peregrine Falcon exhibits strongly positive trends at HNC that are similar to those of the Merlin with the aggregate average of 2006–2008 counts 24% higher than the aggregate average of 2003–2005 counts. The 2008 count (56) was more than double the count (25) during the first year of full coverage (2003) at HNC.

**Prairie Falcon** (3). 2008 was a bad year all around for western raptors at HNC. While the 2008 Prairie Falcon flight was something of a rebound from the worst FC era flight of 2007, it was still 25% below the

six-year HNC average. The first of these big falcons appeared on 26 October, the second on 14 November, and the third on 12 December. The first two birds were adults and the third an immature.

**Mississippi Kite** (7). After two disastrous seasons in 2006 and 2007, the Mississippi Kite flight this fall rebounded fairly strongly—though the 2008 count was still approximately 12% below the six-year average. The first and peak flight of kites (2) occurred on 20 August. Five additional single birds were scattered throughout the peak month of September with the last seen on 21 September. Hitchcock is not a reliable site for monitoring Mississippi Kite population trends.

## NONRAPTOR FLIGHT

### Waterfowl, Shorebirds, Wading Birds, and Gulls

As always, the nonraptor season totals are not anywhere near as scientific as our raptor counts. The 2008 totals—Great Blue Heron, nine (peak six on 20 August); American White Pelican, 1,664 (peak 730 on 26 September); Double-crested Cormorant, 6,372 (peak 1,761 on 27 September); Snow Goose, 476,215 (peak 326,500 on 14 November); Ross's Goose, 169 (peak 61 on 23 November); Greater White-fronted Goose, 796 (peak 425 on 25 October); Franklin's Gull, 5,527 (peak 3,500 on 30 September); Ring-billed Gull, 1,098 (peak 780 on 17 November) Overall, totals for this group were quite mixed: Great Blue Heron and Franklin's Gull, extremely poor; American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant, below average; Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Ring-billed Gull, robust.

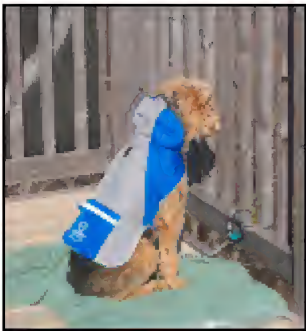


Figure 2. Even when all the raptors are flying to the west of the tower, experienced counters like Griffin are always on the lookout for a rarity sneaking past on the east side! Photograph on 14 October 2008 by Jean Martin, Honey Creek, IA.

### Passerines and Near-Passerines

Other than a very poor showing for Eastern Kingbird with a season total of 61 (peak 52 on 24 August), totals for this group were either average or excellent. Falling into the average category were Blue Jay, 8,176 (peak 2,295 on 26 September) and American Crow 23,556 (peak 7,600 on 26 October). The total of 1,609 Red-headed Woodpeckers (peak 880 on 26 September) was a runaway new record. The total of 406 Common Nighthawks (peak 400 on 13 September) was also above average.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to ALL who helped at the hawk watch: Brett Ford, Chad Graeve, Kelly Herek, Tina Popson, Elliott Bedows, Aaron Brees, Fritz Davis, Linda Dennis, Dog (2008 official hawk watch canine and hawk counter's dog), Keith Dyche, Ryan Evans (who did a wonderful job all season as HNC hawk counter), Chuck Fuller, Griffin (official hawk watch canine and volunteer mascot) (Figure 2), Matt Giovanni, Jonas Grundman, Richard Hendrick, Jori and Stan How, Bill Johnson, Clem Klaphake, Mary Kramer, Don and Shirley Maas, Jean Martin, Sue Mattix, Jason McMeen, Jim Meyer, Kay Niyo, Mark Orsag, Babs and Loren Padelford, Don and Janis Paseka, Sandy Reinken, John Rutenbeck, Bill Scheible, Jim Sinclair, Kent Skaggs, and last, but certainly not least, Jerry Toll (who continues to be the main driving force behind the HNC hawk watch by logging more hours banding and counting than anyone else), and to everyone else who visited HNC and participated in the 2008 hawk watch!

# **Raptor Banding at Hitchcock Hawk Watch 2008**

*Jerry Toll*

## RAPTOR BANDING EFFORTS

What a difference a year makes. In its second year of operation, the Hitchcock raptor banding program attained its goal of capturing and banding more than 100 raptors. This successful season was due to the merging of the banding program vision and the whim of nature. There was a continuous stream of volunteers, students, and visitors to the banding station. The volunteer banders were trained to assist in the operation, which increased the efficiency. We found that if one person trapped while the other processed the captures, then the capture rate increased. Two volunteers trained this season have been selected to become sub-permittees for the 2009 season. Students from the raptor ecology class at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) visited on four occasions and experienced raptor field training first hand. The banding station is looking forward to future cooperative efforts with UNL and others interested in using the banding station as a platform for raptor research. Raptor education outreach is a continuing goal of the banding station. There were numerous visitors invited to experience the process.

During the annual Hawkfest at Hitchcock on September 27, we had the opportunity to show a captured Red-tailed Hawk and talk about its ecology and morphology to more than 80 people gathered before releasing it. Because the majority of raptor species banded

at Hitchcock rely on frontal systems for their migration, weather patterns largely dictate the number of raptors that migrate past Hitchcock. This season, there were favorable conditions for the first time in three years. As an indication of the difference, the total raptors counted on the 2007 Hitchcock Hawk Watch, which ended 20 December 2007, was 9,273. During the 2008 season, that number was eclipsed by the 10 November count of 9,750 (with a season-end total of 10,715). This increase came despite the near collapse of the Swainson's Hawk migration past Hitchcock in 2008. Clearly, weather patterns played a role in making raptors available for capture this banding season.

In 2008 at Hitchcock, five species of raptors were captured, processed, and released. The banding season lasted from 5 September until 2 November with a seven-day-per-week coverage. Only four days were missed due to poor weather conditions during the fall season. Of the 105 captures during the season, 70 were Red-tailed Hawks. The majority of those were aged as HY (hatch-year) juveniles (57). The remaining 13 were aged as AHY (after hatch year) adults. Gender cannot be definitively determined among red-taileds except during breeding season, but a few individuals were so large that they were most likely females. Four weighed in excess of 1,400 grams and required a larger band size (7D). The majority of the captures were of the eastern *Buteo jamaicensis borealis* subspecies. Of those, five were identified as Krider's. Five of the western subspecies *B. j. calurus* were captured, all after 8 October. Of those, three were light morphs, one rufous morph, and one dark morph.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk capture rate was again a disappointment this season. Despite efforts to attain starlings to use as lure birds at the beginning of the season, none were attained until 19 October, well past the peak season for accipiters at HNC. Nonetheless, 22 gutsy sharp-shinneds were attracted to pigeon lures weighing more than the little accipiters themselves and were captured. Probably due to the less-than-ideal-lure-bird situation, the ratio of attempts to actual captures for Sharp-shinned Hawks was highly unfavorable (more than 2:1). Of those captured, 17 were HY juveniles and four were AHY nonjuveniles. There were seven males and 15 females.

Cooper's Hawks were more likely to be attracted to the pigeon lure; therefore, when compared to the ratio of sharp-shinned to Cooper's seen at the hawk watch, there was a disproportionately larger number of captures of Cooper's Hawks (11) [a ratio of 2:1 compared to the HNC's seasonal ratio of 5:1]. Of those captured, three were HY juveniles, three were ASY (after second year), and five were AHY. There were five males and six females.

Two species were added to the species capture list—a Merlin and a Swainson's Hawk (Figure 3). The Swainson's Hawk almost went undetected. Never having had a Swainson's in hand before, I thought I had an intergrade eastern/western red-tailed. After documenting the unusual plumage and morphological characteristics and photographing it, it was released. When I saw it soaring, I knew what it was! I then had to backtrack and learn to look for those characteristics while the bird is in hand.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to the Projects Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, The Audubon Society of Omaha, and the Pottawattamie County Conservation Foundation for financial support provided. A warm thank you to the volunteers who en-



*Figure 3. Swainson's Hawk banded on 26 September 2008 by Jerry Toll at the Hitchcock Nature Center banding station. Photograph by Jerry Toll, Omaha, NE.*

thusiastically contributed their time: Sandy Reinkin, Jonas Grundman, Linda Dennis, Steve and Linda Van Riper, Joe Phillips, Denise Lewis, and Janis Paseka. James Theile provided lure birds and shared the expertise to catch our own in the future. Every project needs someone like Larry Webber who can make any kind of equipment. Thanks Larry! And special thanks to the staff of the Hitchcock Nature Center and the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board who have been and continue to be very supportive of the raptor banding and HNC efforts.

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# Some Notable Iowa Bird Specimens

Matthew C. Kenne

The purpose of this paper is to document some noteworthy Iowa bird specimens that have been unreported in the literature of Iowa birds. Philip DuMont conducted a thorough review of specimens in the various Iowa museums in preparation for his book (DuMont 1933), but an overall search through widespread United States museums wasn't attempted. A recent trend by museums to provide public online access to their bird specimen catalogs has transformed what was once a slow and impractical process. Researcher and curiosity-seeker alike can now quickly sort through the results of thousands of naturalists' efforts over time, from all across the country, without leaving their own computer.

As expected, the vast majority of birds collected in Iowa are of the commonest migrant and nesting species. Specimens that I searched for were those of species considered Accidental, Casual, Extirpated, or Extinct by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union; the first records of a species' known occurrence according to *Birds in Iowa* (Kent and Dinsmore 1996); specimens of species for which there are no known specimens according to *Birds in Iowa*; nest records of rare species; known, published specimens that have gone missing over time; and others that just piqued my curiosity. This search is incomplete. I focused mostly on larger institutions with the oldest collections, but many smaller museums still lack online search. However, more data are becoming search-capable as time and funding become available. When an interesting bird specimen was located in a collection, I contacted the curatorial staff and asked them to determine if a correct specimen matching the online description could still be found, and whether the information on the specimen tag correctly matched that which was obtained through their electronic database. This is a necessary check—data entry and transcription errors enter over time, as does the misidentification, deterioration, and transfer of specimens, along with losses caused by moving and accident.

Data were obtained from records held in the following institutions and accessed through ORNIS data portal <<http://olla.berkeley.edu/ornisnet/>> on 5 September 2007 and 10 December 2008: Yale University Peabody Museum, New Haven; Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Camarillo; University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor; Bell Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara; Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing; American Museum of Natural History, New York; California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge; Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

## SPECIMEN LIST

**Western Grebe:** The recently discovered Ralph Handsaker collection contains a clutch of three eggs taken 9 June 1924 at Eagle Lake, Hancock Co. This represents not only the first known nesting in Iowa, but the earliest

confirmed record of the species itself. One of the eggs is pictured on page 51 of *Oology and Ralph's Talking Eggs* (Henderson 2007; Zaletel 2008). At the time of this writing, information about the Hansaker collection had not

entered the online database of its new home at the Yale University Peabody Museum (YPM).

**Swallow-tailed Kite:**

A single egg (#124479) at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology (WVZ) from 8 May 1878 in Black Hawk Co. represents one of only a handful of specimens from when this species was common in Iowa, and the only existing egg.

**Whooping Crane:** An egg (WVZ #86353) collected 10 June 1881 near Iowa City, Johnson Co., by A. K. Fairchild extends the known former nesting range south by two counties.

**Whooping Crane:** The set of two eggs (#6817) from 3 May 1883, near Crystal Lake, Hancock Co., collected by J. W. Preston and reported by Anthony Hertzel (Hertzel 2004), is currently housed in the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology.

**Whooping Crane:** DuMont (1933, page 60) reported: "Seven Iowa specimens were secured by D. H. Talbot and his collectors. Of these, four remain in the collection of the University of Iowa Museum." The whereabouts of the three remaining specimens was unknown at that time. One from 8 April 1887 at Holly Springs, Woodbury Co., is currently #12408 at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Denver. One from 13 April 1884, at Wolf Creek Slough, Woodbury Co., is currently #230984 at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.

**Marbled Godwit:** A clutch of four eggs taken near Colo, Story Co., on 20 May 1904 by Ralph Handsaker was likely the last from

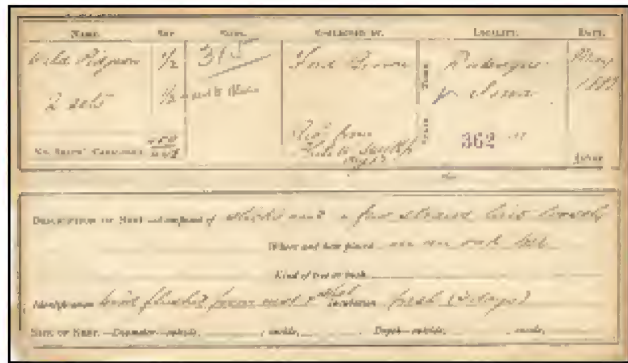


Figure 1. Fred Brown's specimen tag for his May 1882 Dubuque Passenger Pigeon egg (AV 23074). Nest composed of "sticks and a few straws laid loosely in an oak tree." Identified by "bird flushed from nest & shot." Photograph and permission for use granted by Krista Fahy, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Archives, Santa Barbara, CA.

Iowa (YPM, Henderson 2007, photo, page 97).

**Ruddy Turnstone:** #38345 at the Bell Museum of Natural History (BMNH) was taken 25 May 1887 at Storm Lake, Buena Vista Co., by Bond. It is the first confirmed record of the species in Iowa.

**Dunlin:** BMNH #38329 taken 18 November 1885 also by Bond at Storm Lake, Buena Vista Co., is the first confirmed Iowa record of this species.

**Passenger Pigeon:** A set of two eggs collected by Fred Brown near Dubuque in May 1882 is #AV 23074 in the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (Figure 1). This record gives a confirmed date for nesting in Dubuque Co.

**Passenger Pigeon:** #980M at the Michigan State University Museum is an egg collected by C. N. Page on 27 May 1877 near Muscatine, Muscatine Co. This is the first reported nesting confirmed for Muscatine Co.

Walter G. Savage was an avid bird collector from Hillsboro who offered in 1897 to sell

his cousin David L. Savage his “collection of 400 bird skins (of 150 kinds) and 100 egg sets (about 50 kinds) for \$100.00.” (Kent 2000). He later found buyers, as DuMont reported: “An important collection from the southeastern corner of the state was secured by Walter G. Savage in the ‘90’s, and is now in the Dwight collection, American Museum of Natural History, New York City.” (DuMont 1933, page 13). Almost 500 of Savage’s

bird skins (of about 175 species) remain at the American Museum of Natural History, with another 30 at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, and five at Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology. The remains of his egg collection (about 80 sets of 24 species) eventually settled at the Yale Peabody Museum. Below are some of his interesting collections.

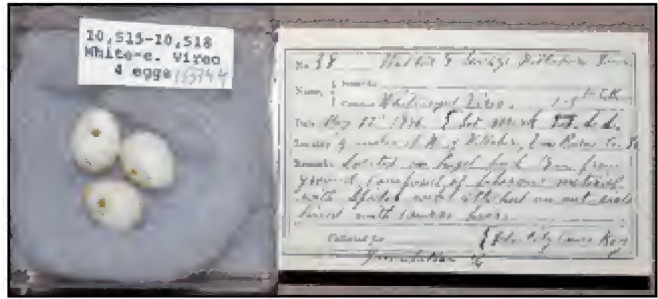


Figure 2. Walter G. Savage’s clutch of White-eyed Vireo eggs from 17 May 1896 (YPM 133744). Nest “Located on hazel bush 18 in. from ground, composed of fibrous material with spider webs attached on outside lined with course [sic] hair.” Photograph and permission for use granted by Dr. Kristof Zyskowski, Yale University Peabody Museum, New Haven, CT.

**White-eyed Vireo:** A three-egg set (YPM #133744) (Figure 2) taken 17 May 1896 and skins #378778, #378779, and #378780 at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) were collected by Walter Savage in Van Buren Co. These are the only known specimens of this species from Iowa.

**Bewick’s Wren:** Two egg sets (YPM #135472, YPM #135473) from 14 May 1898 and 2 July 1897 were taken by Walter Savage in Van Buren Co. Only one other specimen was previously known, also collected by Walter Savage.

**Worm-eating Warbler:** One egg at the California Academy of Sciences (#59574)

from 5 May 1897 and skins #379971, #379972, and #379973 (all AMNH) were taken north of Hillsboro in Van Buren or Henry Co. by Walter Savage. These are the only known Iowa specimens.

**Smith’s Longspur:** John Krider of Philadelphia collected several Smith’s Longspurs near Lake Mills, Winnebago Co., on one of his first trips to Iowa. Five are at the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) at Harvard, two are at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and another is listed at the American Museum of Natural History. Specimens MCZ #16651 and MCZ #16652 from 3 May 1870 are the first confirmed reports of this species in Iowa.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the helpful staffs at the museums I contacted (not only the institutions listed above, but many more as well) who showed interest and encouragement and shared their time with me by answering questions and examining and photographing missing pieces of Iowa’s ornithological history. This paper is truly theirs.



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## Bullock's Oriole in Story County

### *Art Check*

On Monday, 8 September 2008, I was enjoying one of my many Mondays off work at my house two miles south of Nevada, Story County. I still had my grape jelly feeder out and had noticed a lot of activity around it, with many Baltimore Orioles feeding.

As I prepared to leave the house, I walked by the kitchen window, which looks southeast over the deck and my feeders. I noticed a flash of an oriole-sized bird away from the jelly feeder, but immediately recognized it as something different. It was of similar size and shape to the Baltimore's I had been watching all morning, but with a bright white wing patch that flashed brightly when the bird flew into the woods. I also noticed a black eye stripe that differed from the head pattern of a Baltimore Oriole. Its color was primarily a yellow-orange on its breast, with some black on its head and back. I was excited by its appearance and after consulting my field guides determined it resembled a male Bullock's Oriole. Having seen it only briefly, however, I decided to hunker down for a better look.

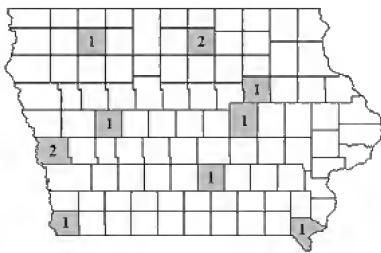
Two hours later, the bird briefly reappeared on the grape jelly feeder. While this visit was also brief, I was able to get an excellent look at it, and at that time felt strongly it was a Bullock's. It did appear to be somewhat more yellow than orange on its breast and head than some of the field guides suggested. Despite the fact that all of the field markings were otherwise consistent with a male Bullock's, I was somewhat concerned by the fact that it appeared to be fairly rare in this part of the country. At that time I decided I should seek a more educated opinion and contacted Steve Dinsmore, who graciously agreed to come and have a look. That evening, after about two hours of sitting and waiting in our kitchen,

It visited my feeder erratically through 15 September, and seemed very uneasy in its new surroundings. It was extremely shy and would quickly fly to the woods with even the slightest movement in the house, often not returning for hours, if at all for the rest of the day. Although it appeared the same morning as the large group of Baltimore Orioles, I never observed it associating with any of them, and it did not move on when they did. Twelve lucky birders were able to view the bird, although many more missed seeing it.

Thanks to Steve Dinsmore for his assistance in positively identifying this great bird as well as for his assistance with this report.

# Brant in Mason City

In the fall, the campus of the North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) has remarkable appeal for migrant geese. Apparently, the rural setting, three protected ponds, extensive lawns, and surrounding acres of corn appears ideal to the geese. It is typical on a mid-November day to encounter several thousand Canada Geese, including both *interior* and *maxima* races, nearly as many Cackling Geese, and small numbers of Snow Geese and Ross's Geese. Very occasionally, there may be White-fronted Geese.



On 20 November, 2008, I left the campus about noon to find some lunch. As I drove north on the winding road along the east side of the campus, I noticed two small geese feeding on the lawn, keeping their distance from the other geese present. They lacked the white chin straps



that are so evident on Cackling Geese, and their necks and heads appeared solid black. I knew to suspect Brant, and stopped to investigate. The two birds were about the same size as Cackling Geese, had gray bodies, black folded flight feathers and tail, and pure white vents. The gray body contrasting sharply with the demarcation of the black neck indicated they were the eastern race of the Brant, *Branta. b. hrota*, the sixth goose species to be recorded at NIACC. Thin white edging on the wing coverts and the lack of the usual delicate white necklace indicated these birds were juveniles.



Figure 2. Brant, Cerro Gordo, 20 November 2008.  
Photograph by Paul Hertzell, Mason City, IA.

I called several other Mason City birders, and waited in my truck until the first, Carolyn Fischer, arrived. Then she was kind enough to wait while I went home and got my camera. I completely forgot about lunch.

The two Brant stayed at NIACC, feeding on the lawn periodically during the day, and roosting on the central pond at other times, for about a week as the temperature slowly dropped and ice spread across the ponds. On the 27th, Thanksgiving Day, with all open water gone from the ponds, the two geese departed.

This is Iowa's 11th record for Brant, and ninth for the eastern race (Figures 1 and 2). All but one have been fall or winter occurrences.

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## Glossy Ibis in Iowa County

*Torre J. Hovick*

On 20 May 2008, when driving west on 108th Street in Iowa County, I noticed a large wading bird feeding in a flooded field. I first saw the bird at about 9:20 A.M. and watched it until about 9:40 A.M. There had been various shorebirds and ducks in the field for many days so I had been spending a lot of time scanning the field for new arrivals. This bird was much larger than a Greater Yellowlegs and had a dark overall plumage. It wasn't as large

as a Great Blue Heron but had that body build. It had a decurved bill. The bird was dark blackish-purple with iridescent shine in the early morning sun. I scanned it with my binoculars but it was just far enough away that I couldn't see its face very well. So I put my scope on it and viewed the bird for approximately 15 minutes. I noted that the orbital skin was a dull gray color and had a line of small bluish feathers bordering it that were broken around the eye. The eye appeared to be a dark color and the bill was a yellowish brown color. I also noted that the legs of the bird lacked any bright coloring and appeared gray. I thought the bird may have been a first-year White-faced Ibis. But the bright glossiness of its feathers led me to believe it was a mature bird and that's when I concluded that it was indeed a Glossy Ibis. The bird probed the moist soil in the field the entire time I viewed it. It was feeding very actively and wasn't bothered by my viewing whatsoever. Later, on the 20th, I returned to the field about 3 P.M. and the bird was still actively feeding. On 21 May, the bird was viewed in the same field at two different times but was never seen thereafter. This represents the sixth record of a Glossy Ibis for Iowa and continues the pattern of an increase in sightings in recent years.

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## Winter Record of Brown Pelican in Lee County

*Stephen J. Dinsmore*

On the morning of 18 December 2007, I was birding the Fort Madison waterfront in Lee County. At my first stop at the end of 20th Street, I almost immediately spotted a Brown Pelican standing on a barge that was frozen in the ice. I studied and photographed the bird from 10:15–10:45 A.M. (See back cover photograph, *Iowa Bird Life* 78[2].) The bird was alone, so there were no other species for comparison. However, it was clearly a large bird, and I estimated the body was roughly the size of that of a nearby Canada Goose. The long bill was pale-colored with a yellow nail and large gular pouch. The eye was dark. The lores and area around the eye were unfeathered with dark facial skin. The forehead, crown, and auriculars were dull yellow with a few darker feathers forming a short crest. The nape and neck were white. The entire body, including the mantle, underparts, wings, and tail, was dark brown except that the feathers along the flanks and sides of belly had white shafts that created a streaked appearance. The legs were a dark flesh color. The bird appeared healthy

and uninjured, despite the odd date. On the basis of the head and neck pattern and body coloration, I concluded the bird was an adult Brown Pelican.

The bird was relocated at this location on 19 December, but not thereafter. This represents the 13th record of a Brown Pelican in Iowa and the first in winter. All prior records were between late March and late November with more in May than any other month.

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## **Snowy Plover: Second Fall Record for Iowa**

*William Scheible*

On 3 September 2008, Ken Lowder and I hiked out to the tip of Sand Point at Hawk-eye WMA in Johnson County. Numerous shorebirds were present on a series of mudflats to the northwest of the point. Almost immediately, I noticed a small, pale bird actively feeding about 150 yards away. We both focused our scopes on this bird, and, thanks to the presence of several Semipalmated Plovers in close proximity, we concluded that we had found a Snowy Plover. Both of us have seen this species in California and on the Gulf Coast, and Ken had seen the Snowy Plover found at Lake Rathbun in 2005, but it certainly isn't a bird with which we are especially familiar.

Several features we observed on this bird indicated a Snowy Plover. The upper parts were a pale gray-brown, much lighter than the chocolate tones of Semipalmated Plover. It had an incomplete dark-gray/dull-black breast band. The bill was thin and dark, not stubby and orange. Semipalmateds have orange legs, but this bird's legs were dark. The most helpful identification clues were provided by the Semipalmated Plovers that afforded side-by-side comparisons. Our bird was clearly smaller, by perhaps 15%. Many sources describe Snowy Plover as "chest heavy," but we thought this bird was trim and certainly more petite than the robust semipalmateds. Piping Plover, the only other species in our differential diagnosis, was excluded by size (it's about the same as a semipalmated) and leg color (orange, not black). We believed this bird to be a nonbreeding adult.

The feeding behavior of this bird was interesting. Although it pursued the typical run-pause-peck action of a plover, it did so much more rapidly than its more deliberate cousins. If this is a useful feature, I've not seen it published.

Snowy Plover is a world-wide species. In the United States, there are year-round breeding populations on the Gulf and Pacific Coasts. Migrant populations breed in the Great Basin and in the southern Great Plains (Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas).

The first documentation of Snowy Plover in Iowa was not until 1988 (Dinsmore and Fix 1988). In the ensuing 20 years, there have been 11 additional sightings. Almost all of these have been in the spring, from late April to mid-June. Indeed, the Rathbun bird in 2005 and this Hawkeye bird are the only records from the fall. Snowy Plover has been reported in eight Iowa counties, all in the southern half of the state. However, each of the states surrounding Iowa has a record of Snowy Plover. Although this delightful species has a brief history in our state, recent records suggest that we'll be seeing more of *Charadrius alexandrinus* in the future.

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## Barrow's Goldeneye at Red Rock Reservoir

*Stephen J. Dinsmore*

On 30 November 2008, I was birding the north shore of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. At 11:47 A.M. as I was scanning a small flock of feeding goldeneye, I spotted a



Figure 1. Barrow's Goldeneye, Red Rock Reservoir, Polk, 30 November 2008. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

bird that I recognized as a male Barrow's Goldeneye. I watched and photographed the bird at relatively close range until I left at 12:05 P.M. (Figure 1). The size, shape, and behavior identified the bird as a duck, and the small bill, head shape, and general coloration identified it as a goldeneye. The head, throat, and upper neck region were dark colored except for a distinct teardrop-shaped white mark extending from the forehead downward to a point just below the eye. The bill was

black and distinctly shorter and narrower at the base than the bills of nearby Common Goldeneye. The head shape differed from a Common Goldeneye—the forehead angle was steeper and the crown flatter. The lower neck, chest, flanks, and underparts were white except for a black mark at the shoulder that extended to the waterline. The mantle and upperwings were black except for a neat line of small white spots along the tertial tips. The rump, vent, and rectrices were black. I did not see the bird in flight. On the basis of these marks, I concluded the bird was an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye. The bird was relocated at the same locale on 1 December, but not thereafter. Barrow's Goldeneyes are casual migrants in Iowa with most records from late fall. It is encountered most frequently along the Missouri River Valley in western Iowa although there is a previous record of a male at Red Rock Reservoir on 9 December 1995 (Dinsmore 1997).

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## Barrow's Goldeneye in Woodbury County

*Tucker J. Lutter*

On the morning of 16 November 2008, my dad and I headed out to bird some local areas in Woodbury County. We were hoping to see some waterfowl so we visited a few wetland areas that had some birds earlier in the fall. The wetlands were frozen so we decided to check a still unfrozen dairy farm pond just south of Luton. There were many waterfowl on the pond including a small group of goldeneye that contained one strange looking individual. I looked the bird over and noticed the white crescent on the face, the black bar separating the front from the side, the lack of white in the wings, and the steep forehead. With all these field marks there was no doubt that it was an adult male Barrow's Goldeneye. I took field notes and got some photos of the bird to substantiate the report and then I called many of the local birders. After the successful morning of birding, my dad and I went to celebrate my first self-found "accidental" bird by going out for lunch at my favorite restaurant.

Later that day the bird was relocated by several other birders. The goldeneye stayed until 18 November and provided great close-up views to the many birders that came, including some who traveled across the state to see it. Dick Bierman was the last one to see

the bird and he observed it as it left. The reason for its departure was because several men came and shot at the ducks until they were all gone! The two men who did this were taught a lesson by the farm owner who was not happy about them shooting at the ducks either. Overall we had 13 birders who saw the bird before it left.

A Barrow's Goldeneye was found and viewed for a short time at the Port Neal Ponds by three birders only eight miles away on 22 November but flew off not long after being sighted. It is thought to be the same bird that was at the farm but there is no way to know.

I had a fun time helping others see this bird and I will certainly remember this for years to come. Being fifteen and finding a rare bird like this is an amazing experience. I can't wait to find another rare bird.

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## **Prairie Warbler at Brushy Creek Recreation Area**

*Stephen J. Dinsmore*

On 6 September 2008, I was sorting through a large mixed-species flock at Brushy Creek Recreation Area in Webster County. I soon spotted a tail-wagging warbler with yellowish underparts that I recognized as a Prairie Warbler. I studied and photographed the bird from 9:40 to 9:49 A.M. at close range. The size, general shape, and bill structure identified the bird as a warbler. The short bill was pointed, straight, and dark-colored with a pale base. The crown was olive and faded to a gray nape. The loreal spot was also gray. A gray crescent-shaped region bordered the lower eye and gradually darkened towards the base of the bill. The eye was dark and was bordered by distinct yellow eye crescents. The throat and malar region were yellow. The underparts were yellow except for indistinct heavy black streaking along the flanks. The mantle was olive-colored and I could see at least one red feather. The upperwing pattern was as follows—olive coverts, narrow yellow tips to the greater and median secondary coverts formed two wingbars, darker flight feathers. The folded rectrices were dark from above, but mostly white with dark tips when seen from below. The legs were dark with flesh-colored feet. The bird's behavior included a steady but slow tail-pumping action. On the basis of head pattern, distinctness of the streaking on the underparts, a lone red feather on the mantle, and the color of the feet, I concluded that the bird was a juvenile male Prairie Warbler.

Prairie Warbler is a casual migrant and summer visitor in Iowa. Most records are from the eastern half of the state in May and June. Fall records are unusual and this record is notable for the location and the September date.

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## **Book Review: *Birding for Everyone***

*James J. Dinsmore*

Robinson, John C. 2008. *Birding for Everyone. Encouraging People of Color to Become Bird-watchers*. Wings-on-Disk, Fairfield, CA. 143 pp.

The theme of this book by former IOU member and Iowa State University graduate John Robinson is relatively simple and one that should be obvious to anyone who has been around the birding scene for at least a few years. Anyplace where you go birding or attend a birding oriented meeting or event, you find that the participants are nearly all Caucasian. Why are there so few birders with an African American, Hispanic, or Asian background? And of equal importance, if we knew why there are so few, what could we do to get more ethnic minorities involved in birding?

The book starts with a foreword by Kenn Kaufmann and an introduction in which the author tells how he got involved in writing this book. The first six chapters cover both personal experiences by the author (The making of a birdwatcher, Guess who's coming to bird?, Why study birds?) along with three "how-to" chapters (How do I become a birder?, How to identify birds, Birding and the internet). I found the personal chapters more interesting because they provide insight into the author's experiences and how he developed into the acknowledged professional that he is today. The how-to chapters are short and useful but to a large extent duplicate similar coverage in numerous other books. Perhaps they were included for novice birders but I suspect that most people who will purchase this book are doing so to learn more about the central theme, birding and ethnicity. For those readers, the chapters are superfluous.

The core of this book consists of three chapters that report the results of several surveys and a series of interviews done to try to learn how minorities get involved with birding, some of the factors that they see as limiting that participation, and how others might be attracted to birding. I suspect that these chapters will attract most of the attention from readers of this book.



Chapter 7 covers the results of several surveys. In one, 322 longtime North American birders indicated that in their many years of birding they had encountered an average of only 2.4 African American birders (a third had encountered none). In a subsample of respondents to a large national survey on recreation and the environment, Robinson asked 357 African Americans whether they considered themselves someone who watches or studies birds (a participant) or not. About 100 (28%) considered themselves participants, less than the almost 43% of 4,700 Caucasians surveyed who called themselves participants. [A similar survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found the participant rates for both groups lower, 6% and 24%.] Robinson quizzed the 357 African Americans on topics such as whether they belonged to a birding group, fed birds, how often they visited state parks or similar areas, and a series of questions on various factors that might limit their participation in birding (lack of time, lack of money, someone to bird with, etc.). Most of the data presented in the book comes from the responses to those questions.

Chapter 8 includes the results of a series of interviews that Robinson conducted with 12 individuals, all minorities, to assess how they got involved in birding, their level of involvement, and their assessment of factors that might limit their participation in birding. They also were quizzed on how more minorities might be recruited to birding including comments relative to the role that home and parents, schools, the community, and public communications might take in increasing minority participation in birding. Their comments here are often instructive. Chapter 9 includes short biographies of six individuals (all minorities), four of whom have careers involving various aspects of birding and two who participated in a program designed to get young people involved in birding. Their stories are interesting and at times inspiring.

All of the minorities surveyed in Chapter 7 were African Americans. Six of the 12 interviewed in Chapter 8 and three of the six described in Chapter 9 were African American and the others were Hispanic, Asian, or other minorities. Although little is said directly about these other ethnic groups, the author seems to imply that his results are applicable for all of these groups.

In the last chapter, "The challenge—Are you up for it?," the author challenges the reader to find a way to get involved. This chapter includes short and informative essays by two eminent birders, Ted Lee Eubanks and Paul Baicich. I think that the one by Baicich (who has talked at two IOU meetings) is particularly relevant for IOU members. He also presents some good suggestions on things that could be done. The book ends with three appendices (copies of the surveys, and sections on birding festivals and birding tours), a bibliography, and a list of references pertaining to the surveys.

So what did Robinson learn? His surveys suffer from a small sample size, and the results are sometimes hard to follow, but the main points seem so self evident that we really don't need elaborate data sets to establish that relatively few African Americans participate in birding. However, the small sample size of African American birders makes it difficult to try to understand what limits their participation. Lack of role models, no one else to go birding with, the lack of time and money, and feeling uncomfortable in natural areas are all suggested as being important limiting factors.

I believe that this is an important book because it finally raises an issue that has been talked about, hesitantly, by many for years. The message is clear. Few African Americans

are involved in birding, and apparently few know much about birds or are interested in birding. We also are given some ideas on why so few are involved in birding and what might be done to increase their participation.

Where I think the book falls short a bit is spelling out more clearly what needs to be done. He does provide some suggestions (e.g., more education, more willingness to serve as role models, greater willingness of birders to reach out to communities that are now underrepresented), but is somewhat vague on exactly how this might be done. I had hoped that he would spell out more clearly his thoughts on specific steps that need to be taken. One point that is not vague is why the author believes it is important to increase participation by minorities in birding. Throughout the book, he makes it clear that he believes deeply that birding is indeed for everyone and that we need to work to make that a reality. And tied closely to that is his belief that if we don't do so, public support for conservation programs, wildlife refuges, and similar efforts could suffer in the future. For anyone with an interest in the future of birding in the United States, I can strongly recommend this book.

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## Minorities and Birding: A Commentary

*James J. Dinsmore*

In the winter of 1978–1979, I became aware of a student named John Robinson who was enrolled in the vertebrate biology class I was teaching at Iowa State University. I guess I was a slow learner because it took me some time to match that name with the face of a very quiet young man who had darker colored skin than the rest of his classmates. The next quarter John enrolled in my ornithology class, and it soon became clear to me that he was special. This young man really knew his birds! By the time John graduated from ISU in 1982, he had worked for several springs as a volunteer lab assistant in my ornithology class, become an avid birder in Ames and central Iowa, attended several IOU meetings, and was a regular contributor to the field reports in *Iowa Bird Life*.

After graduation, John worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and then the Forest Service in Illinois, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and California before retiring in 2005. He also started his own business writing software for sorting and storing field observations and identifying birds, wrote a novel and a book on Tennessee birds, and eventually focused his attention on the issue of why are so few ethnic minorities involved in birding. The latter

issue dominated his attention from 1999 until now, culminating with the publication of his book *Birding for Everyone* (which is reviewed on page 57 of this issue) and a companion article that appeared recently (Robinson, Green, and Cordell 2008).

The publication of John's book brings to the forefront an issue that has been talked about by birders, usually somewhat quietly, for a number of years. Whether you go on a field trip, attend the meeting of a local or state birding group, attend a birding festival, or go on a birding tour, it is obvious that few minorities are involved in the hobby that we, as members of the IOU, value so highly. Why are so few involved and what can be done to try to attract more to this pastime, one that has been advertised as one of the most popular and fastest growing in North America? Anyone who has birded in the Rio Grande Valley, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, or a host of other places has encountered numerous individuals of varying ethnicities who have tremendous abilities to find and identify birds in the areas in which they live. And they also seem to take great pleasure in finding those birds and sharing them with others. In short, they are like us! But why are there so few in North America and should we care?

The latest figures I could find on ethnic backgrounds of United States citizens (2005) indicated that about 65% were Caucasian, 15% Hispanic, 13% African American, 4% Asian, and the balance with mixed ethnicity or from a few other ethnic groups. The percentage of our population that is composed of groups other than Caucasian has been increasing steadily for many years and the percentage of Caucasians has been declining accordingly. Various estimates suggest that sometime in the mid- to late twenty-first century, Caucasians will become a minority of the population in the United States.

The purpose of this commentary is not to argue whether these changes are right or wrong. It seems apparent to me that the changes will continue. My goal is to make IOU members aware of these trends, provide a viewpoint of what those changes might mean for birding in particular and natural resources conservation in general, and provide a starting place for what I hope will be some discussion among the IOU membership. Birding is just one of many outdoor activities although it is very popular one with millions finding various levels of enjoyment. While birding has grown in popularity in recent years, other outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing have shown steady and somewhat dramatic declines in participation. Advocates for both of those activities already are promoting plans to try to reverse those trends. In my view, it is not too soon to be thinking seriously about trying to broaden the base of support for birding. One way to do so is to try to find ways to attract a segment of the population that currently shows limited interest in birds and bird-related activities.

What happens if we don't reach out and try to attract others to our hobby? One quick look at the financial situation of our nation should be sobering enough. Our national leaders already have committed hundreds of billions of dollars to various buyouts and other plans to try to restore some stability to our economy. A new president and congress have just taken office, and they have plans for numerous new programs, all of which will require billions more. With increased competition for what will probably be scarce federal dollars, some popular programs that are beneficial to the environment and also to birds may fall by the wayside because of lack of money. While there is still fairly good support for some environmental programs, I fear that support may gradually erode as our population becomes

increasingly urban and increasingly composed of people who at least currently have little connection with outdoor activities.

What does all of this have to do with a birding group with about 500 members in a relatively small state with a fairly small ethnic minority population? Maybe not much but give it some thought. Although the population of minorities in Iowa is increasing with some communities now having significant minority populations, almost certainly Iowa will continue to have a Caucasian majority population for many years. Still changes at the federal level could have an effect on support for programs in Iowa. For example, changes in federal funding for agricultural programs, which can have tremendous effects on grassland birds in Iowa, are already occurring. Changes in funding for national parks, wildlife refuges, and national forests, which have limited importance in Iowa, could affect our ability to bird in other states as well as affecting birds that migrate through Iowa.

What does the IOU have to offer? By way of example, we have often talked about the lack of younger members in our organization. We have been proactive in providing educational materials on birds to young people, easily spending thousands of dollars on those efforts. About 15 years ago we helped fund the publication of two booklets that contained teaching materials on birds that could be used in the public schools and we also helped supply a number of boxes of teaching materials that were delivered to the area education agencies. We donated hundreds of copies of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas book to public school libraries. Such efforts help in educating young people but the real return may not come until some years in the future when these young people become adults and hopefully have a better appreciation of birds.

In the meantime, we have had a few young people join our group although I suspect that the efforts described above had little to do with their involvement. In my 30 plus years in the IOU, I am aware of only seven individuals who were actively involved with the organization while they were of precollege age. Of those, three now have careers that include active involvement with birds and three others are active birders in Iowa. My point is that those who got involved young have tended to stay involved. I believe that all of them had active support from either their parents or a good mentor or both. Is there a lesson here?

The last time I recall seeing an African American attend one of our IOU meetings was when John Robinson was still a member. And he left Iowa in 1982 although he did attend a joint Iowa-Minnesota-Wisconsin meeting in LaCrosse in 1990; at the time John lived in Wisconsin. I also recall seeing a few minorities attending several of the pelican birding festivals at Saylorville Lake a few years ago, an indication that events like that and the Bald Eagle days held in Iowa hold some promise of attracting minorities to them. I do not have the skills that I think are needed to reach some of these groups. People with skills in human dimensions, extension work, mass media, and similar areas are likely to have better ideas on how this might be done.

It seems somewhat ironic that a young man of African American heritage who grew up in Pittsburgh first became aware of birds and began developing his now considerable skills as a birder in Iowa. And now he has become one of the first to speak out to birders to become more inclusive and to include all ethnicities in their birding culture. I believe that even in Iowa, we need to start talking and thinking about some of the issues, and eventually we need to start doing something, starting with young people. Otherwise, we may

find ourselves living in a country with an emerging majority that has little knowledge of or interest in the out-of-doors in general or birding in particular.

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## Birding the Colo Bogs Wildlife Management Area

*Hank Zaletel*

The landscape at the Colo Ponds has changed remarkably since I last wrote about the ponds in 1984 (Zaletel 1984). At that time, there was no publicly owned land; it was farmed each year. During wet years, extensive mudflats and potholes offered ideal habitat for shorebirds and puddle ducks.

Jump start to the present and you will find that nearly 625 acres of land are owned or managed by the Iowa DNR; thus, the name Colo Bogs Wildlife Management Area. Thanks to the efforts of Story County Pheasants Forever and many environmental and governmental agencies, this has been accomplished since 1995.

With public ownership, prairie grasses and flowers have been planted. Tiles have been broken, non-perforated tile installed, and dikes built. The habitat has been radically altered. It will be many years before the effects of these changes are reflected in its birds and wildlife.

The wetland complex is located 2.5 miles east of Colo in Story County (Figure 1). It can be reached by taking County Road E41 (The Lincoln Highway) or U.S. 30. The complex is located approximately one mile west of the terminal moraine of the Wisconsin glacier, which passed through 10,000 years ago.

The bog, a result of its glacial history, has been studied extensively by soil scientists, many papers have been written, and there are many references about its uniqueness in texts.

The tour will start on County Road E41 just past 720th Avenue, a north/south road. Directly east of the farmstead on the northeast corner is a **sheep pasture** (Figure 1.1). Here, almost every shorebird on the IOU checklist has been seen including Black-necked

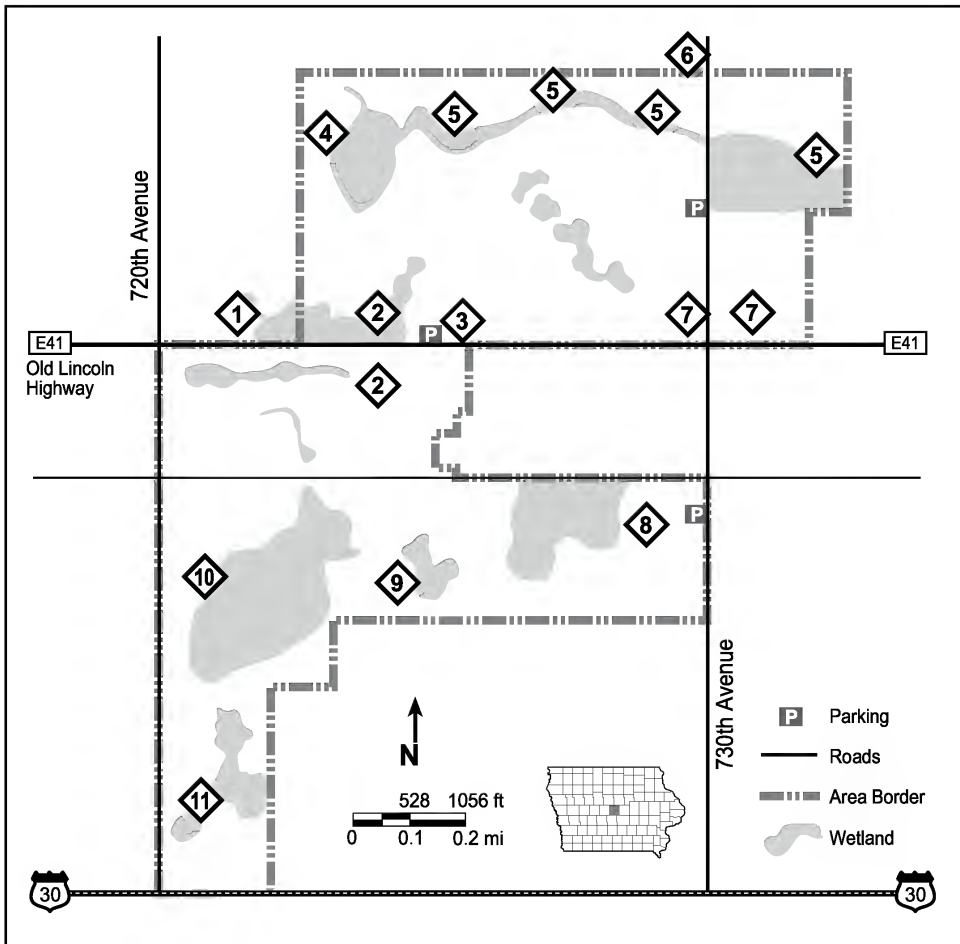


Figure 1. Birding Colo Bogs Wildlife Management Area: (1) sheep pasture, (2) wetland at road's edge, (3) parking lot, (4) large northwestern wetland, (5) long, linear wetland along north edge of WMA, (6) pasture, (7) wetlands at corner, (8) wetland west of parking lot, (9) wetland farther west of parking lot, (10) original bog, (11) wetlands south of bog.

Stilt, American Avocet, and Marbled Godwit. Two species of ibis, Eared Grebe, Sandhill Crane, Cattle and Great Egret, and Least Tern are some of the other unusual sightings that have been found here.

Before County Road E41 was paved in the late 1920s, the **old Lincoln Highway** (Figures 2 and 3) went through the middle of a large wetland. Today, in wet years, the **water extends to the road's edge** (Figure 1.2). American Coots and Pied-billed Grebes are frequent nesters.

On the south side of the road, dikes have been built. Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, and Marsh Wrens have nested in past years.



Birders should be warned that the shoulder of the road is narrow and that traffic at times can be disruptive. I have been stopped here by the Iowa Highway Patrol. They insist that all vehicles must be completely off the traveled surface of the road.

Proceed to the **parking lot** (Figure 1.3) on the north side of the road. Walk north from the lot. Sometimes there is a path and other times there is not. Knee-high boots are recommended. Ticks are common as well as mosquitoes. Because of a slight elevation, the wetlands on the other side of the rise are not visible from the road.

As you walk north, you will notice many of the 100 **wind turbines** (Figure 4) that are located just one mile from the wetland complex. Because they are new this year, it is to be determined whether they will have an effect on the birdlife of the area.

A **large wetland** will appear on your left to the northwest (Figure 1.4). Expect to hear Marsh Wrens and see Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Common Yellowthroats will scold you.

An even better place to see Yellow-headed Blackbirds is along a **long, linear wetland** (Figure 1.5). In recent years, American Bitterns are frequently heard but seldom seen.

Listen for the call of the Upland Sandpiper. They usually can be found anywhere along the long wetland. They also can be found in a **pasture** directly north of the complex (Figure 1.6).

Sitting on the fence separating the pasture from the wetland complex, one can usually find Bobolinks and Dickcissels. Looking east from the road, the linear wetland continues. Waterfowl can frequently be seen during migration.

At the corner of E41 and 730th Avenue, there are **wetlands** (Figure 1.7) on both sides of the road during wet periods. Your car provides an excellent blind to view the puddle ducks and shorebirds that are present.

During migration, Northern Harriers are commonly seen. In winter months, Short-eared Owls sometimes can be found at sunset patrolling the prairie.

From County Road E41, go south over the railroad tracks on 730th Avenue. There is a parking lot at the top of the hill. A Dickcissel as well as a Western Meadowlark nest here during the summer.



Figure 2. Looking northwest toward unpaved Old Lincoln Highway (County E41), the first U.S. transcontinental highway, as it went through the middle of the wetland in the mid-1920s. Photograph is from the Iowa Department of Transportation's photo collection.



Figure 3. Looking east as mid-1920s cars attempt to travel along the unpaved Lincoln Highway (County E41) as it went through the middle of the wetland. Note the license plate numbered 6, which designated Benton County then! Photograph is from the Iowa Department of Transportation's photo collection.

From the parking lot, walk west to the **wetland** (Figure 1.8). Year-round water guarantees an ever changing bird population. Muskrat populations determine cattail numbers and the breeding numbers of water birds. Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Common Moorhen, Spotted Sandpiper, Tree Swallow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Great-tailed Grackle have nested at this wetland.



Figure 4. Some of the many new wind turbines recently erected to the northwest of the Colo Bogs WMA, 20 January 2009. Photograph by Hank Zaletel, Nevada, IA.

American Bittern, Virginia Rail, and Sora have been seen during breeding season but nesting has not been positively confirmed. Black Tern is always a possibility during the summer.

Walking west, a **wetland** (Figure 1.9) was just developed and offers great promise. This wetland cannot be seen from the parking lot. Further west is the **original bog** (Figure 1.10). During the summer of 2008, a night roost of up to 25 Great Egrets would come in at sunset and spend the night in the willows.

To the west, on 720th Avenue from U.S. 30 to County Road E41, is a dirt road. Even after modest rains, the road is impassable. In wet years, portions are under water.

The **wetlands south of the bog** (Figure 1.11) are largely unexplored. Viewing points are poor, mosquitoes thick, the water is deep and the cattails are tall. The dirt road on the west is impassable for considerable portions of the spring and summer.

I have birded the Colo Ponds since 1977. Each trip is an adventure as one never knows what will be seen. During wet years, chances of seeing good birds increase. I would highly recommend the ponds for shorebirds during the spring migration in wet years as they can be easily viewed in great numbers from your car.

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Zaletel, H. 1984. Finding water birds in eastern Story County. *Iowa Bird Life* 54:27–29.

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# **Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life***

*James J. Dinsmore*

The new year started out with something new in *Iowa Bird Life*, the journal's first ever colored plate. Featuring a stunning pair of Lazuli Buntings painted by Cedar Rapids artist Earnest Steffen, the plate accompanied an article by William Youngworth in which he described his attempts to locate Lazuli Buntings along the Iowa-South Dakota border north of Sioux City. Steffen had previously provided the journal with numerous line drawings which were used to illustrate a number of articles.

A second article by Beth Proescholdt describes her experiences with using weather patterns to predict when she would encounter many fall migrants in central Iowa. Another article describes Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge along with a checklist of its birds. A total of 183 species were on the checklist but now the total has jumped to more than 240 species.

The 1958 Christmas Bird Count was the topic of the longest paper. A total of 92 species, second most ever behind 98 species in 1957, were found on 24 counts. The top two counts were Davenport with 74 species and Clinton with 53. Most totals were in the twenties or thirties. Of most interest were reports of Townsend's Solitaires from three counts. Previously this species had been reported in Iowa only a few times.

Among the notes, one by Alois Weber described an unusual concentration of 65 Bald Eagles in Keokuk. Counts in the hundreds are now routine at that location.

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## **Iowa Ornithologists' Union Budget Meeting**

*6 December 2008*

The IOU budget meeting was held at Hunt Kain and Associates, Oskaloosa, Iowa. President John Rutenbeck called the meeting to order at 11:10 A.M. In attendance were John Rutenbeck, president; Paul Roisen, vice president; Cathy Konrad, secretary; and Doug Hunt, treasurer; board members John Bissell, Jim Fuller, Ken Lowder, Bill Scheible, and Tom Schilke; and committee chairs and members Karen Disbrow, Mary Beth Hunt, Ann Johnson, and Hank Zaletel.

**Formulation of 2009 Budget:** Treasurer Doug Hunt presented the IOU budget expenditures for 2008, current as of the end of November. Based on 2008 actual revenues and expenditures, committee requests, and anticipated income and operating expenses, the 2009 budget was formulated.

#### REVENUES

**Dues:** Due to an increase in regular membership fees at Goldfinch level from \$20 to \$30 approved at the last general IOU membership meeting, the 2009 proposed dues income was increased from \$16,782 to \$17,623.

**Donations:** \$1,500 proposed. This is decreased from \$6,724 in 2008.

**Meeting and Bird Trips:** These have been break-even items in the past and were proposed to continue the same.

**Sales:** Sales from merchandise proposal increased from \$645 to \$1,000 and sales designated to publications increased from \$49 to \$275.

**Total Interest Income:** Proposed to \$1,000, up slightly from \$930.86. Treasurer Doug Hunt suggested putting \$45,000 in a one-year CD and will investigate best available rates.

**Auction Income:** No auction income proposed.

**Transfer from General Operation Fund Savings:** \$3, 534 to balance the budget.

**Total Operating Revenue:** \$24,932.

#### EXPENDITURES

**Publications:** Ann Johnson presented a Publications Committee budget request of \$15,507, increased from \$10,627.13 in 2008. The increase is required due to internet service, list-serv, software, and publications. \$1,370 of this amount represents the cost of putting the educators' books in digital format. This money will be taken from the Virginia Crocker Memorial Fund as this was the purpose of that bequest.

**Membership:** Karen Disbrow requested \$900. The Membership Committee proposed offering a free one-year membership to one person from each Iowa bird club (new member only) as an incentive to build membership. Bird clubs would be defined as having a birding mission, an established name, address, and contact person.

**Records:** \$100, no change from 2008.

**Library:** \$25.00, no change.

**Conservation/Projects:** \$3,000.00 budgeted for 2009. No requests have been received by committee at this time.

**Meeting Expenses:** Paul Roisen reported that this has been a break-even item so no income was entered in the budget for this line item; however, group felt \$1,200 should be budgeted to cover expenses and to help cover the cost of the banquet speaker.

**Bird Trip Expenses:** This has been budgeted in the past, but has been a break-even item, so no expenses requested.

**Breeding Bird Atlas:** Ann Johnson requested \$1,000 for this project. The money will be used for t-shirts. The shirts may be sold and may actually generate income.

**Officers:** No increase requested except for a slight increase for Membership Coordinator expenses (from \$745 to \$800) resulting in total of \$975.

**Bank, PayPal Fees, Insurance:** Bank and PayPal fees are increased from \$287.95 to \$325, and liability insurance from \$387 to \$400.

**Other:** This category increased from \$37 to \$1,500 due to a request from Paul Roisen for a digital projector.

**Total Operating Expenses: \$24,932.**

#### OTHER ITEMS

**Myrle Burke Awards and IOU Membership:** The Iowa Academy of Science periodically honors up to four college students who have shown an interest in ornithology. This honor is the Myrle Burke Award. Each recipient receives \$750. The Myrle Burke Awards are announced in April. Traditionally, IOU gave each recipient a free one-year membership. The practice of awarding the IOU membership has not been consistently applied in recent years. IOU member Stephen J. Dinsmore was a recent recipient of this honor. Hank Zaletel noted that recipients used to present their research at an IOU meeting. Ann Johnson suggested the gift for 2009 be retroactive (i.e., the April 2009 recipient(s) will receive the IOU membership and publications for the first four months forward to the end of that year). Motion by Paul Roisen and seconded by Bill Scheible that IOU will award a one-year membership in IOU to each Iowa Academy of Science Myrle Burke Award winner. The recipient will be invited to submit an article about their ornithology work to either the *IOU News* or *IBL* and present a summary at an annual IOU membership meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Hank Zaletel volunteered to contact recipients and remind them of this invitation.

**IOU Teacher Materials Online:** Ann Johnson further elaborated on the educators' books line item in the budget. Hank Zaletel and Ann Johnson have discussed digitizing the Educator's Booklet. The booklet could then be available for purchase on DVD. Housing the digital version on the IOU web site will probably require additional server space. Informa-



tion in the current booklet needs some revision, which Linda Zaletel will provide. The hard copy booklet will continue to be mailed out as available.

**Institutional Dues Increase:** John Rutenbeck clarified that a foreign membership is \$35, but an institutional membership (U.S.) is \$30, the same as an individual adult membership at Goldfinch level. John requested that the IOU web site add a button for institutional members in the membership breakdown. Ann Johnson will take care of this when site update occurs. Ann Johnson reminded the board that the sponsoring groups for spring and fall meetings have the right to offer a free registration plus meals for one local student (under age 21 years). IOU needs to promote this benefit.

**Records Committee:** Ann Johnson reported that Aaron Brees's term on the Records Committee ends this month and Chris Edwards is recommended for membership. Motion by Bill Scheible and seconded by John Bissell to approve Chris Edwards. Motion carried unanimously.

**Bird Photography Contest:** Paul Roisen reported that this event was not offered last year but there is interest in re-introducing the contest. Tom Lawson has agreed to organize the event. Jim Moreland and Steve Dinsmore have expressed interest in judging the event. Group discussed benefits of anonymous judging. Group suggested that Tom Lawson be the organizer and find a third judge. Paul will communicate board discussion to the contest organizers.

**Rental Car Insurance:** Ann Johnson requested, in support of IOU birding trips, that IOU will guarantee up to \$500 for deductible per rented vehicle collision damage not covered by participant fees. Paul Roisen moved and Jim Fuller seconded. Discussion centered on the fact that if these fees are built into the trip, the money might not be needed and re-funding is difficult and more work for the volunteer organizing the trip. In addition, if the money is collected then refunded before attendees disband and the vehicle is later found to have a minor problem, the trip leader is left with the bill. Doug Hunt will check on the possibility of also pursuing a policy to cover this issue. Motion carried unanimously.

**IRS 990 Form:** Treasurer Doug Hunt will file the required form in late January–early February 2009.

**Field Guide Library:** John Rutenbeck reported that Dee Smith from Bloomfield has offered IOU a collection of field guides from around the world. The board discussed the possibility of establishing a lending library. Hank Zaletel brought up the fact that up until the 1950s the IOU did have a bird book library. Group discussed issues such as space for holding the books, time, bookkeeping, and other issues. Also, the previous IOU library was not extensively used. Discussion also centered on methods of obtaining field guides through interlibrary loan, used copies on web-based commercial sites, and the IOU listserv site for requesting book loans. The group appreciated the offer but felt that this would not be a project to undertake.

**Additional Items:** Paul Roisen discussed the need for a digital projector to be used for speaker presentations at IOU functions. Borrowing a digital projector each time is difficult and there is the concern of damaging the projector. When projectors are available at site, they are often outdated. The board and committee members present agreed; this item was added to the budget under *Other*.

Motion to approve the balanced budget of \$24, 932 (with \$3,534 coming out of savings to balance the budget) was made by Paul Roisen and seconded by John Bissell. Motion carried unanimously.

Bill Scheible put out a request for articles, either to *IBL* or *IOU News*.

Paul Roisen presented information on upcoming meetings. Paul reminded the group that the spring meeting will be held 1–3 May 2009 at Carroll, Iowa. Jon Dunn will speak at the Centerville Lake Rathbun meeting to be held 9–11 October 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted, Cathy Konrad, secretary



**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES** (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Institutional \$30, Foreign \$35, Goldfinch \$30, Bluebird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Join, give a gift, or manage your membership on-line at <[www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org)>. Paper forms for new members and renewals may be mailed to the treasurer (see inside front cover). Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available from Membership Coordinator Pam Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista Dr., #20, West Des Moines, IA 50266 (2birders@hickorytech.net).

**INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS:** Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word to editor. Research manuscripts should include abstract, introduction, study area, methods, results, discussion, and literature cited sections and will be sent for peer review. Accepted manuscripts will be published promptly depending on space available.

**Photos and graphics:** Submit only original, unsized, and unenhanced photos in your camera's JPEG (\*.jpg) format. Photos must be 300 dpi at the size they will be printed (6-1/2" wide by 6-1/2" high for the cover and various smaller sizes inside), so setting your camera to its highest possible resolution is recommended. The editor will do any resizing and enhancing required because any previous adjustments to the photos may make them unusable. Submit photos and graphics as e-mail attachments.

E-mail all material other than seasonal reports to editor at Kay@KayNiyo.com. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (Vol. xx[1])**, **April 1 for spring issue [2]**, **July 1 for summer issue [3]**, **October 1 for fall issue [4]**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

**IOU NEWS:** Harley Winfrey, 1450 Oriole Rd., Boone, IA 50036 (hsbhwinfrey@hotmail.com)

**IOU WEB SITE:** <[www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org)>, Ann Johnson, Webmaster

**IOWA RBA:** John Bissell (jabissell@mchsi.com)

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:** Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

**BIRD SIGHTINGS:** Subscribe at <[www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org)>

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Update your on-line profile at <[www.iowabirds.org](http://www.iowabirds.org)> or send address and e-mail changes to Membership Coordinator Pam Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista Dr., #20, West Des Moines, IA 50266 (2birders@hickorytech.net).

**UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION:** Spring 2009: 1–3 May 2009, Swan Lake SP, Carroll; Fall 2009: 9–11 October 2009, Lake Rathbun, Centerville

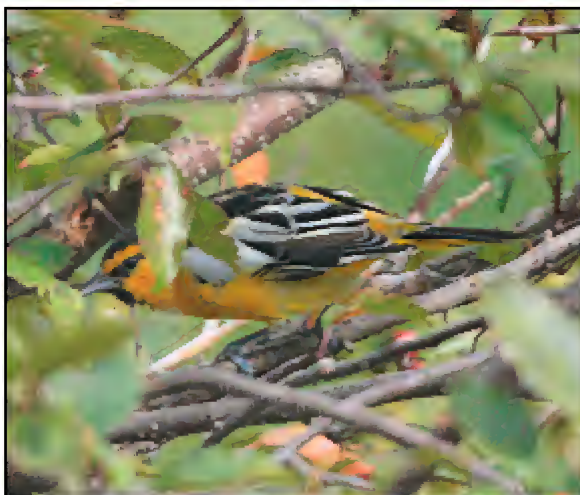
**FRONT COVER PHOTO:** Adult Black-legged Kittiwake below Saylorville dam, Polk, 31 October 2008. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

**BACK COVER PHOTO:** Bullock's Oriole, Nevada, Story, 8 September 2008. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

**DESIGN:** Marshall Desktop Publishing Inc., Evergreen, CO

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